YOUNG IN THE CHURCH

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Advent in the Church

by

REV. WILLIAM HENRY SMITH, B. D., PH.D.

CHRIST CHURCH HOUSE
State and Swan
Schenectady 7, N. Y.

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

Modernism, Fundamentalism, and Catholicism

The Teacher in the House of the Lord

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

TO THE MEMORY OF

MISS ABBIE VOUGHT

who by holding a Sunday School Class in her own home on Lafayette Street laid the foundations of Christ Church

AND TO

the following clergy who served in old Christ Church and who have gone to their eternal reward

THE REV. F. C. WAINWRIGHT	1868 - 1869
THE REV. L. N. VOIGHT - -	1871 - 1875
THE REV. J. N. ROGERS - -	1875 - 1880
THE REV. DR. J. L. PARKS -	1880 - 1883
THE REV. DR. E. L. TOY - -	1883 - 1891
THE REV. W. C. PROUT - -	1891 - 1893
THE REV. J. F. OLMSTEAD -	1893 - 1897
THE REV. McD. BLEECKER -	1897 - 1904
THE REV. A. HARPER - - -	1905 - 1907

Printed in U. S. A.

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Schenectady, N. Y.

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A PARISH VOLUME

This book was printed for distribution among the parishioners of Christ Church, Schenectady, to commemorate the passing of all debts on the Church.

PICTURE CREDITS

The author gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to the names listed below for enabling him to use the engraver's cuts in this volume. The companies are all located in Schenectady.

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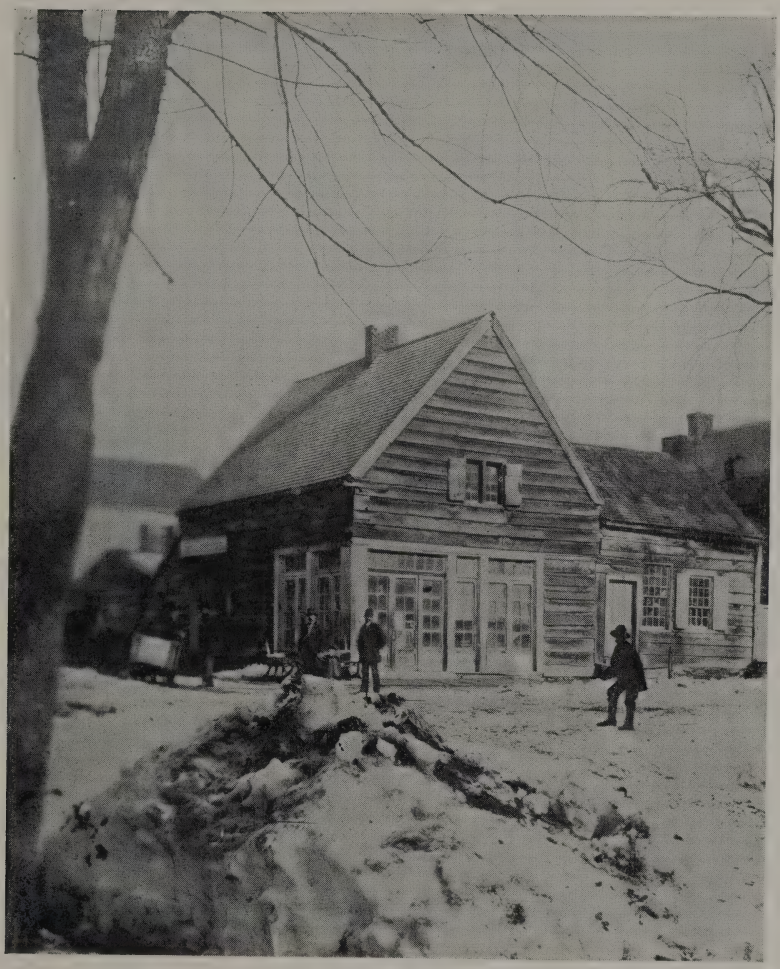
PART I

A Commentary on Christ Church

A COMMENTARY ON CHRIST CHURCH

Christ Church had its start from the labors of Miss Abbie Vought who gathered together a Sunday School Class in her own home on Lafayette Street, between Chapel and Allen. The attendance soon became too large for the accommodations of her own home and was transferred to the White Street School house, which in those days stood opposite what is now the City Hall, Clinton Street being called White Street from State to Liberty. How long the class members met in the school house is not recorded, but in September, 1867, after the parish had been duly recorded under its present name, the site was purchased opposite Crescent Park for the purpose of establishing thereon Christ Church. No picture of Miss Vought is known to exist. Her home has been pulled down and replaced by a more modern structure. Mr. Edwin N. Butler describes it as *a small little house with a long step.* The picture herewith belongs to the same period and stood at the corner of State and Washington where the Alexandra now stands.



Courtesy David Mahoney Hardware Co.

OLD SCHENECTADY

The cornerstone of Old Christ Church was laid on Saint Andrew's Day, 1867, and on the first Sunday in Lent, 1868, the Church was opened for worship. The first rector, the Rev. F. C. Wainwright, officiated at the first service. The adjacent picture, the earliest known to exist, has a notation on the back of it that it was taken about 1875. The probable date of the picture is 1878. In that year the tower, originally ugly, was stripped to the framework and beautified.

Courtesy Frederick H. Glock Funeral Home

OLD CHRIST CHURCH
Opposite Crescent Park
Midway between Nott Terrace and Lafayette
Built 1868 - Abandoned 1910 - Now demolished

The roll of communicants on March 1st, 1868, numbered thirty-nine, these decreased to twenty in 1870, then grew to fifty-eight in 1873. The early members appear to have been somewhat unstable in their allegiance and plagued by dissension. Within five years the support of the Church became questionable, contributions diminished sharply, the Vestry could not pay the mortgage interest, and consequently the mortgage was foreclosed on January 1st, 1874. The Church was closed. Christ Church continued, however, because Churchwarden Samuel T. Benedict bought in the judgment during a period allowed for redemption. After the foreclosure of the mortgage, the rector, the Rev. Lucius N. Voight, resigned and no service was held for one full year.

Courtesy H. S. Barney Co. Department Store

CHRISTMAS IN THE OLD CHURCH

Some thirty years elapsed between the taking of the photograph shown herewith and the one previously shown. The Church was built in 1868, the rectory in 1889, and the parish house in 1895, an elapse of twenty-six years between the first and the last. Both the Church and the rectory were built of wood, the parish house was of brick. A driveway to the parish house separated the Church and rectory. During the interval between the taking of the two pictures a tree grew up on the left side of the Church, sidewalks were laid, the wooden fence and the lamppost taken down. The stone carriage block in front of the Church remained. The first rector to live in the rectory was the Rev. W. C. Prout.

Courtesy Earl Griswold Funeral Home

OLD CHRIST CHURCH
Parish House in rear - Rectory at side

The picture of the Rev. A. Harper and Choir was taken outside of the old parish house. The parish house was erected in 1895, during the rectorship of the Rev. J. F. Olmstead, and was a separate building at the rear of the Church. On the first floor was a kitchen and two large guild rooms. On the second floor was a large assembly hall and a stage. Unlike the Church, which was heated with large old-fashioned round stoves, the parish house had central heating and steam. The parish house was eventually pulled down to make way for the auditorium of the Plaza.

Courtesy Cardwell's Pharmacy

FATHER HARPER AND CHOIR
1906

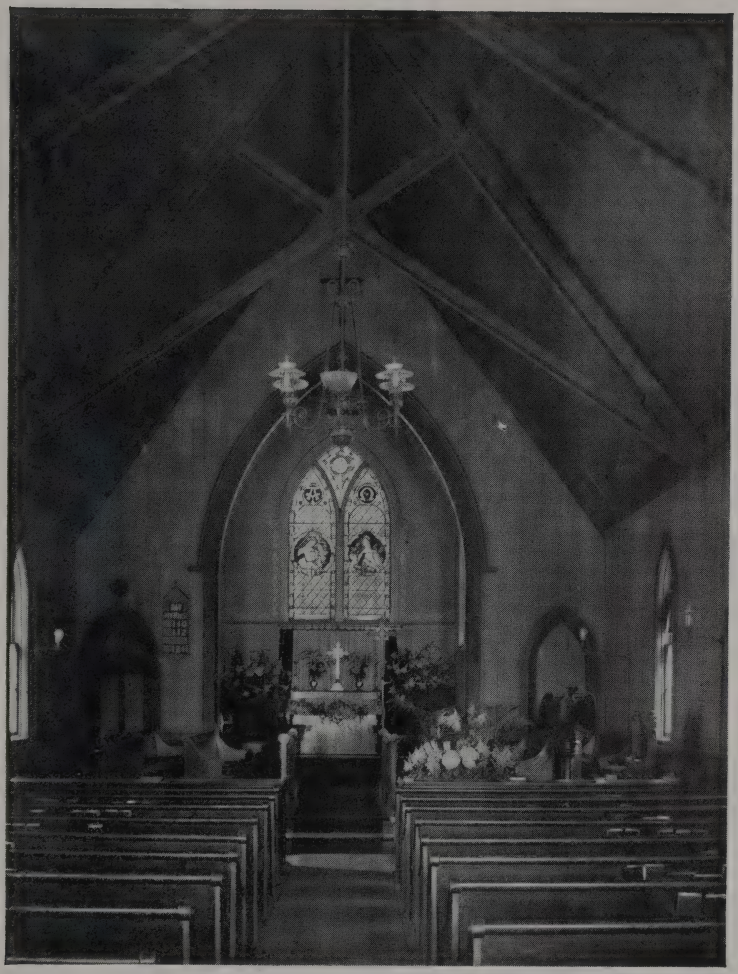
The phenomenal growth of Schenectady from 1900 to 1910 and the consequent growth in Church membership made imperative the consideration of a new and larger Church building. The old Church building was worn out and could not profitably be remodeled. Under the leadership of the Rev. David H. Clarkson the Vestry purchased the site at State and Swan to erect a new and spacious Church. Father Clarkson now lives in retirement at 108 Montgomery Street, Rhinebeck, N. Y.

Courtesy Timeson & Frank Funeral Home

FATHER CLARKSON
1907 - 1916
also
1918 - 1919

A builder whose work lives on

On October 28, 1909, all legal provisions having been carried out, the Vestry sold all the old Church property to Charles D. Whittaker for the sum of $35,000. Out of this money the Vestry purchased of Mrs. Van Deusan the land at the corner of State and Swan for the sum of $13,300, and paid off a $5,000 mortgage on the old Church property. The last service in the old Church was held on Wednesday, March 30, 1910. This was Wednesday in Holy Week. The last service was a celebration of the Holy Communion. Services were then held in the hall of the Public Library until August 1, 1910. The hall used had its entrance on Seward Place and is now used as the children's section of the library.



Courtesy The Wallace Co. Department Store

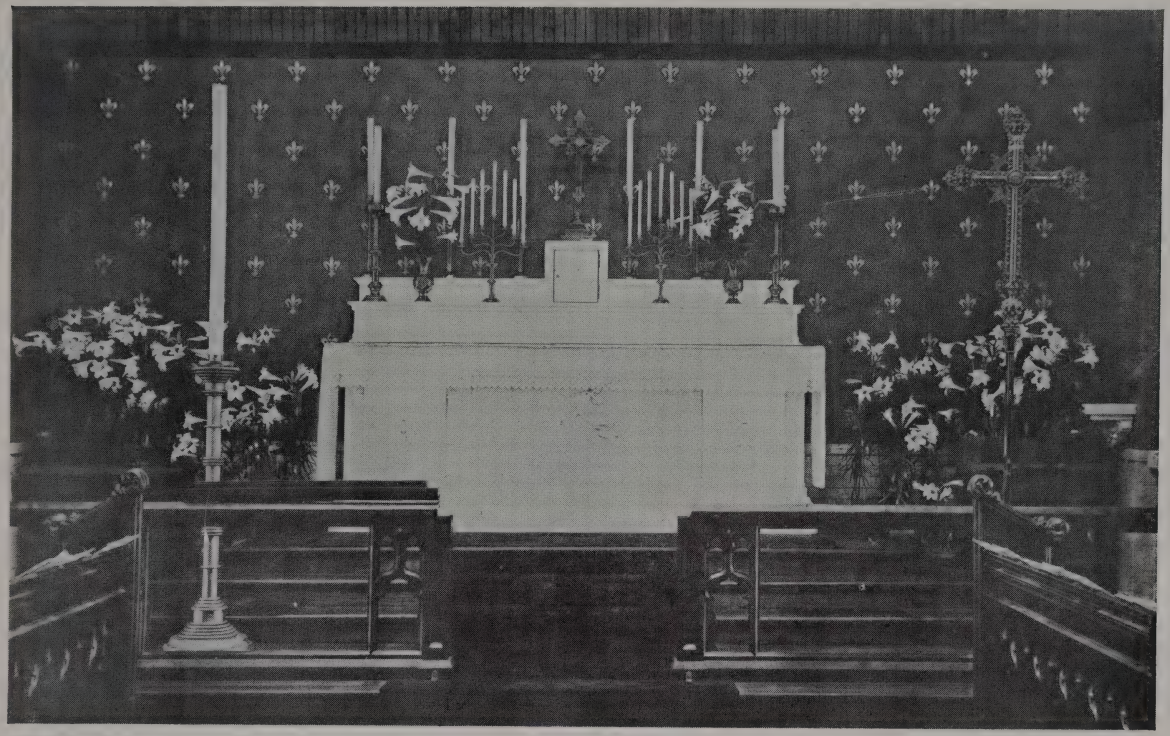
THE LAST EASTER SERVICE
1909

Church services were held in the crypt of the present edifice of Christ Church for five years. The service of breaking the ground took place on Sunday, April 3, 1910, the construction of the crypt was begun immediately, and the first service was held on Sunday, September 25, 1910. A legacy of $5,000 in the will of the late Miss Mary Willard of Schenectady, in 1914, helped to pay off the debt on the crypt.

Courtesy Kivlin & Campbell Funeral Home

THE CRYPT

The picture *Inside the Crypt* shows how the altar looked the first Easter after the crypt was built. The marble altar and all its ornaments were given as memorials, as was also the sanctuary furniture. The paschal candle on the left appears in the chancel only from Easter to Ascension Day to symbolize Christ's risen presence with his disciples during those forty days in which he enlightened them concerning his Church. The seven-branched candlesticks appear on the altar only on joyous or festive occasions. The six office lights at the rear of the altar are lighted at all services. The Mass lights—one at each end of the altar—are lighted only during Holy Communion. They symbolize the two natures, human and divine, of our Lord.



Courtesy Schenectady Granite and Marble Works

INSIDE THE CRYPT

The construction of the rectory on the Church lot was begun in the Fall of 1910. It was completed in 1911, the rector moving in during the month of March. The cost of erection was met by a gift of $5,000 by Mr. William E. Thorn of Cohoes and a mortgage of $3,000. The mortgage has been satisfied.

Courtesy Waldorf Bakery, Inc.

THE RECTORY

Deaconess Pell-Clarke assisted Father Clarkson during part of his ministry in Christ Church and was very active in organizing work among the women of the parish and in teaching in the Sunday School. During all this time the old organ used in old Christ Church was used in the new Church. The organ was bought in October, 1875, a cabinet organ by Mason and Hamlin, costing $565.

Courtesy Charles O. Light Funeral Home

DEACONESS PELL-CLARKE

A woman renowned for good works

In 1914 the Vestry of Christ Church determined to go ahead with the completion of the Church, and on Trinity Sunday, June 7, 1914, the rector, the Rev. David H. Clarkson, acting under the commission of the Bishop of Albany, the Right Rev. Dr. R. H. Nelson, laid the cornerstone of the Church.

Courtesy Wm. S. Wright Wallpaper & Paint Store

THE LAYING OF THE CORNERSTONE

At the time of the completion of the Church the parishioners gave liberally according to their ability. The gift that enabled the Vestry to proceed with confidence was one of $20,000 from Mr. William E. Thorn of Cohoes. The balance of the building cost was carried by mortgage by the Cohoes Savings Bank.

Courtesy Tenney & Tenney Gas & Oil Co.

BUILDING COMPLETED
1915

On the Second Sunday in Lent, February 28, 1915, the Right Rev. Dr. R. H. Nelson, Bishop of Albany, opened the completed Church with a service of dedication. A temporary organ was used until 1931 when a modern Austin organ was installed. A close examination of the organ aperture in the chancel shows that the organ chamber is empty. The organ pipes by the pulpit are dummies.

Courtesy Carl Settle Auto Tire Store

INTERIOR VIEW
1915

The Rev. Frank H. Hallock died in 1944 and at the time of his death was a professor at Nashotah House, Nashotah, Wisconsin. After leaving Schenectady Father Hallock was rector of Saint Barnabas Church, Omaha, Nebraska.

Courtesy Courtland V. Andrew Funeral Home

FATHER HALLOCK
1916 - 1918

A scholar devoted to teaching

The altar which was in the old Church since 1870 was used during the period of the First World War as a war shrine. The dossal was in the form of a service flag with a star for each man of the parish in service. The stars were arranged to point towards the head of our Blessed Lord Jesus on the crucifix, which is mounted on a three-inch brass shrapnel shell, signifying the triumph of the Holy Cross over the forces of evil which cause war. The altar frontal was of regulation khaki with small silk flags, the stars and stripes in the center, flanked by those of the four principal allies, Great Britain, France, Belgium and Italy.

During the Second World War no change was made in the customary hangings of the Altar of Repose where prayer is made before the Blessed Sacrament. An honor roll hung near the altar, and by the honor roll stood the American flag and a votive light stand at which the congregation burned candles for those in service. Prayer was constantly made in our Lord's presence at this altar for a just and lasting peace.

Courtesy Hillman & Sons, Plumbers

THE WAR ALTAR
1917 - 1918

The Rev. George A. Perry was rector of Christ Church for five years and then went to Canton, N. Y. After leaving Canton he became rector of Christ Church, Troy, N. Y., but failing health forced his retirement. Father Perry died in 1941.

Courtesy Sarto F. Daly Funeral Home

FATHER PERRY
1918 - 1924

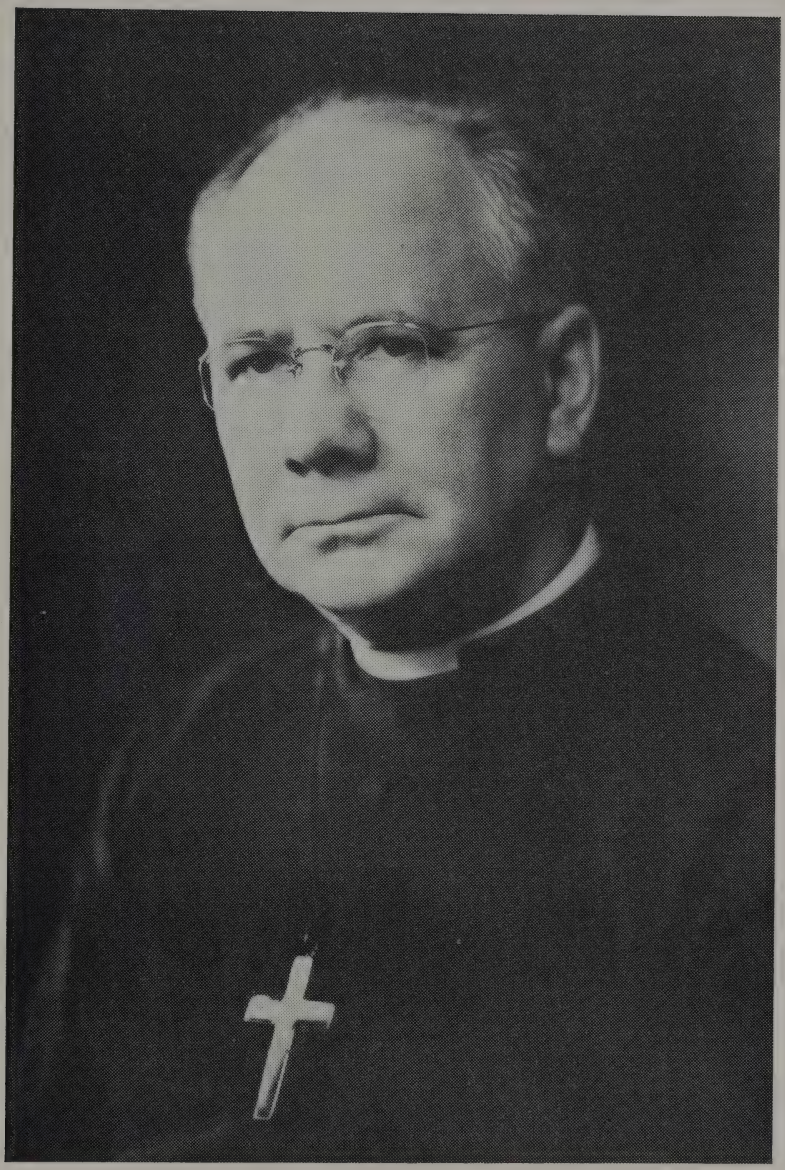
A pastor fondly remembered

Almost all of the choir boys in the picture of Father Morse and the Choir served in the Army or the Navy during the 2nd World War. The Rev. Donald H. Morse is now at Trinity Church, Broadway, opposite Wall Street, New York City.

Courtesy Wade & Winklemeyer Store

FATHER MORSE
1924 - 1930
A priest of singular ability

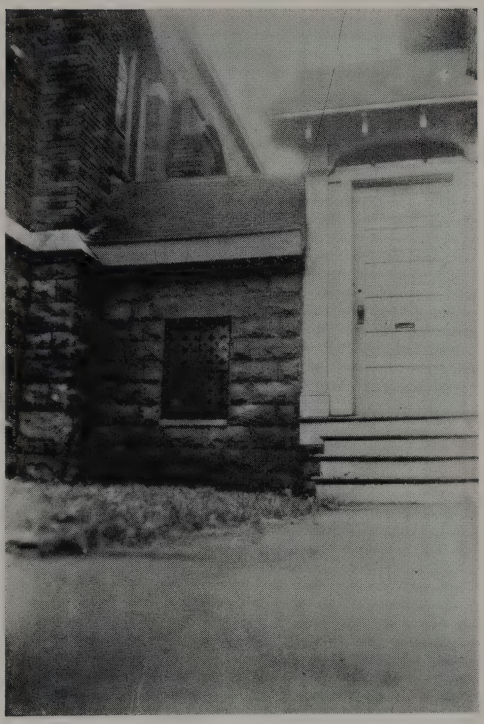
In 1931 the Great Depression of '30-'38 began to be keenly felt in Schenectady. Work and money got scarcer and scarcer. To create work the City of Schenectady undertook to supply gratis to its churches two workmen for a limited time providing they undertook minor repairs and improvements, such as painting and cleaning-up. Taking advantage of this offer the congregation supplied some $500 for materials. The inside of the Church was redecorated and the basement improved. A number of odd jobs were done in the rectory. It was at this time that the Lady Altar was built into the Church and pews placed in the transcepts.



Courtesy James Jennings & Son Funeral Home

FATHER SMITH
1930 -

The passageway between the rectory and the Church was built in 1934. Much of the work of construction was done by Mr. John Evans and his son John. The piercing of the Church wall was done gratis by Mr. Nicholas Humphrey of the Schenectady Granite and Marble Works.



Courtesy The Cloverland Creamery

THE PASSAGEWAY

A fire of unknown origin on Saturday morning, September 5, 1936, burned out the sacristy and the choir robing room, and damaged other parts of the church building. All vestments, linens, choir robes and sacred vessels were burned or severely damaged. The building also suffered from smoke and water. The vestments pictured here were the only ones untouched by fire, these being kept in the rectory. They were worn the next day in Church, the regular services being held as usual.

The discovery of the fire was made by the rector at 5 o'clock in the morning. While sleeping in the rectory he was awakened by the sound of breaking glass. Looking out from his bedroom window he saw the sacristy at the rear of the Church was afire. He telephoned the fire department. The prompt and efficient work of the firemen averted the total loss of the Church.

Courtesy Thomas E. Gleason Funeral Home

VESTMENTS UNTOUCHED BY FIRE
1936

From a picture taken during service after the altar had been redressed and new Eucharistic vestments bought following the fire. The fire burned through the oak door leading into the sanctuary, scorched and blackened the walls and roof in the chancel, burned through the floor and roof of the sacristy, and had begun to attack the roof of the Church. The altar boy is David Hambleton. He is in the act of ringing the sanctus bell.

Courtesy Henry's Cycle Shop

THE HIGH ALTAR

Red burns the lamp in the Sanctuary
To tell that Christ is near.

Upon this altar the Blessed Sacrament is reserved within the tabernacle so that all may kneel in adoration and prayer before our Lord's sacramental presence. The Holy Communion is the Church's central treasure upon earth, it being the sacrament of our redemption and the chief instrument of our union with Christ. After the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord is present in the sacrament to be our spiritual food and sustenance. The custom of reserving the Blessed Sacrament was due in the first case to practical necessity, but later because its benefits became clearly apparent.

Jesus is here with us,
Jesus is here!
Earth fades in mist away,
Heaven's gate is near:
Doubt not, sad heart, nor fear,
For thy dear Lord is here,
Jesus is here.

Courtesy Grant Parks Wallpaper & Paint Store

THE ALTAR OF REPOSE—HANGING LAMP, RED

Lovely Lady, dressed in blue,
Teach me how to pray.
God was just your little Boy,
Tell me what to say.

The Christ Child could not be born of just any woman. God prepared for that coming long before the event took place. Part of that preparation involved the Virgin Mary. The Virgin Mary had to be herself spiritually full of grace before she could be chosen of God as worthy to be the Mother of our Lord. Because God was able to provide through her an antidote to the disobedience that was in the world, all generations call her blessed. Because of her own saintliness and because God superimposed his grace upon her, we hold her in high reverence and declare her to be the most worthy of all God's created beings.

Ave Maria! Blessed Maid!
Lily of Eden's fragrant shade!
Who can express the love
That nurtured thee, so pure and sweet,
Making thy heart a shelter meet
For Jesus' holy Dove!

Courtesy R. R. Bond Funeral Home

THE LADY ALTAR—HANGING LAMP, BLUE

At a supper held in the Church hall in December, 1945, the two churchwardens, Mr. John R. Baker (left) and Mr. Edwin N. Butler (right), burned the Church mortgage. Mr. Baker has been the treasurer of Christ Church for twenty-nine years and a warden for twenty-three. Mr. Butler has been connected with Christ Church ever since its formation and attended Sunday School in Miss Vought's home. He has been a warden for twenty-seven years.

When the Great Depression hit Schenectady in 1930 the Church was paying $662 yearly in interest on its mortgage and bank loans. To reduce this yearly cost, notes of debt indebtedness were distributed throughout the parish, first at 4% and later at 3%, the money obtained therefrom being used to reduce the mortgage. By 1941 no mortgage or bank loans remained, only notes of indebtedness to parishioners. A gift of $2,000 from Mrs. Gertrude Chesbro in 1936 helped to reduce the debt.

The burning of the mortgage also represents the burning of all notes of indebtedness—including those on the organ, the installation of which cost $8,200 plus some incidental expenses. The financing of the organ, which appeared feasible in the Fall of 1930, became increasingly difficult as the depression settled down over the city in intensity. The original plan of paying for the organ through memorial gifts was not successful. After six years $4,150 was still due to the Austin Organ Company. This debt carried a 5% interest charge. In 1937 the organ company became a casualty of the depression and went into liquidation. As the organ had a penalty clause if unpaid by contract, the rector advanced the money and was later repaid through the issuance of parish notes.

Courtesy Butler's Pharmacy

BURNING THE MORTGAGE—1945

In recent years, only during the time Mr. Baker has been treasurer, the Church has paid some $21,000.00 interest charges on its Church buildings alone.

The photograph on the opposite page was taken during midnight Mass on Christmas Eve and pictures the choir singing the chorale which comes after the Epistle and before the reading of the holy Gospel.

Break forth, O beauteous heav'nly light,
And usher in the morning;
Ye shepherds, shrink not with affright,
But hear the angel's warning.
This child, this little helpless boy,
Shall be our confidence and joy,
The powers of hell o'erthrowing,
At last our peace bestowing.

Courtesy Alex G. Baxter & Son Funeral Home

THE CHRIST MASS
Christmas Eve - 1945 - Midnight

Christ Church enters the year 1946 free of debt. This does not mean that the congregation is now at liberty to settle down in idle contentment, selfishly spending all its income upon the glorification of its own forms of worship or upon the beautification of its own Church. The ridding of a Church of all debt is of value only insofar as it frees its members for greater service elsewhere.

A congregation free from debt is free to help other congregations get out of debt, free to shoulder more diocesan work, free to do more missionary work, free to establish another Church in a nearby community. No congregation aiming to do less than this is worthy of being considered a living unit in Christ's Holy Catholic Church.

Courtesy Peckham Wolf Lumber Co.

FREE OF ALL ENCUMBERANCE
1946
The Consecration of the Church—page 554 in the Prayer Book—now awaits the bishop's coming.

PART II

Church Thought in Advent

CHAPTER ONE

ADVENT'S MEANING

The word *Advent* comes from the Latin word *advenio*—to come—and signifies a coming or a visitation. Churchwise it refers to the coming of our Saviour. The season marks the beginning of the Christian year and comes just before Christmas. It has four Sundays in the Western Church, except that there are six in the Ambrosian and Mozarabic rites. The Eastern Church has no season corresponding to Advent but does observe a fast of forty days before the birth of Christ. Advent serves as a preparatory season to our Lord's nativity but the thought of judgment day has traditionally been uppermost in men's minds throughout the season. It is a season of preparation and should be kept as such, always remembering that we best prepare to meet our Lord hereafter when we best prepare to meet him here and now.

Who Comes?

He comes who has changed the spiritual viewpoint of mankind. There is no doubt as to who he is. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is referred to in the Advent collect as he who came in great humility. In that collect two comings are placed in juxtaposition—his coming at Bethlehem and his coming on judgment day. In this way these two advents are brought to the fore, not because there are no other comings to think about during the Advent season but because on these two comings hinge our eternal salvation. These are paramount, so to speak. In the first of these comings Christ came as our redeemer and in the other he will come as our justifier.

As to who he is who comes, he is God. He is no angel or archangel or heavenly visitant, but God himself—the second person in the Blessed Trinity. Unless we remember this we shall question how such a coming can come to pass. Of his identity Saint John says, "In the beginning

was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God . . . and the Word was made flesh." This tells us God became incarnate and was born in Bethlehem. And of his humility Saint Paul says, 'He being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself of all his glory and took upon himself the form of a servant.' So when we think of our Lord as coming we must always think of him as God coming, for when Christ comes in his glory he will not come in the humility of the man Jesus but in all his power as God. It is true that we shall recognize him as God the Son but it is also true that we shall see him as possessing all the glory and power of God the Father.

Before ascending into heaven our Lord said he would not leave us comfortless but would come to us, and he has come. Christ is always coming even when we are not conscious of it. At one time he comes to us spiritually through his Word: "If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him." At another time he comes to us sacramentally: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Our Lord never ceases to come to his Church. He comes and knocks at our hearts and says, Let me come in here, for where I come in I dwell for ever. He comes to us in baptism, in confirmation, in communion, in times of visitation, in moments of sickness and in the hour of death. So while we await that great and final coming on judgment day, we should not forget that that coming is but one of many comings and that our Lord draws near to us here and now. Even when our Lord came at first he did not reveal all his fulness at once, he revealed himself in turn as Christ the child, as Christ the teacher, as Christ the king, as Christ the sinbearer, as Christ the risen conqueror of death.

How Will He Come?

Many look forward with great longing to our Lord's second coming who seem unaware of his presence here and now. These may be likened to the Jews of old who thought they knew how Christ would come but who failed to recognize him when he came. All through his ministry he remained unrecognized except by a few and even these did not realize the greatness of his majesty at first. This suggests a possible analogy with his coming again. It may well be that when he comes again he will be unlooked for in the proper direction and be imperfectly understood. Judgment day may well be an altogether greater and grander revelation of God than the figurative portraiture in the bible would lead us to imagine.

There are times when I find it very helpful to think of Christ's coming as a sudden revealing of himself, my eyes being suddenly opened to a presence already here rather than to a sudden viewing of Christ coming from afar. Even now Christ is never far away, he is always near. Christ never meant to be absent from the world after the brief period of his visible presence in it was over. This we know for he himself promised that where two or three are gathered together in his name there he himself would be present as a fourth.

Christ comes to us in Holy Communion. Many forget that at every communion Christ comes to our altars. When we genuflect we do not genuflect to the altar but to Christ's presence thereupon. When the light burns in the sanctuary lamp it is not to give light but to say that the sacrament is reserved within the tabernacle and that Christ is here. It is true that we cannot see Christ or hear his voice but such sight and hearing add nothing to the completeness of his presence.

Some descriptions of our Lord's coming are clearly figurative and obviously colored by Jewish thoughts and associations. How literally these should be interpreted is a matter of opinion but there is one description which should not be questioned, namely, that spoken by the

angels at our Lord's ascension: "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven will so come as ye have seen him go up from you into heaven." Neither should we question those accounts given by our Lord for he is our supreme authority. There is no higher authority.

All through the ages men have thought an astounding revelation of God would climax the history of the world. Seers have called this the end of the world. Prophets have named it the day of the Lord. Enoch referred to it as a day of judgment; Isaiah as the day when those that dwell in the dust shall awake; Daniel visualized it as the day when one like unto the Son of man shall come in the clouds of heaven; Joel and Malachi speak of it as the great and terrible coming of the Lord. Instinctively we feel such a day must come. Reason tells us that it will wind up the affairs of men. It will be a day when all wrong will be righted, the mystery of the universe revealed, when sin will perish, evil be destroyed, when Christ will ascend his throne to reign for ever.

That Christ will reveal himself in some stupendous and miraculous way we have no doubt. Everything points to some such supernatural disclosure. We are moving faster and faster. We are rolling on we know not whither. Some God appointed rendezvous lies ahead. The earth cannot last forever. If it moves towards the sun it will burn, if it falls away from the sun it will freeze. Man is a created being and it is only reasonable to suppose that the day must dawn when he must give an account to his creator.

When Will He Come?

As to the time when our Lord will come again the bible does not say and no one knows. Certain things must happen before he comes and when they begin to happen we shall know that the Lord is nigh at hand. The bible says that before he comes again there must be a universal preaching of the gospel, portents will appear in the sky, many will fall away from the faith, there will be a with-

holding of the latter rain, a returning of the Jews to Palestine, Jerusalem will fall in battle.

Our Lord did not reveal the time of his coming, rather he gave us to understand that no one knew when it would be, not even the angels in heaven. The disciples wanted to know and tried to find out but Jesus said, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the father hath set within his own authority." Jesus did imply, however, that he would come in an hour least expected. "For in that hour that ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

Many Adventists try to figure out just when our Lord will come and they believe they should do so because our Lord time and time again in precept and parable urged his followers to be on the watch for his return. These believe that the coming of the end is clearly foretold in Daniel 12. Daniel had been told to seal his revelation even to the time of the end, but Daniel wanted to know dates—"How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" The dates were given to him in the form of mysterious numbers, but he was told that he would never understand them, nor would the wicked, but only the wise.

The Church does not attempt, however, to predict from these numbers the date of our Lord's return. This is wise. Many predictions have proven false. The earliest Christians expected his return almost daily and only slowly did their expectations die down. Paul's 2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians was written to discourage such expectations. Within recent years many have put forward scripture proofs that our Lord's coming is imminent and so convinced have they been of the accuracy of their calculations that they have given away their goods in consequence.

That the time for Christ's return draws ever closer we do not doubt, but that coming will be in God's own good time and its date is hidden from man. When God created this world he had a plan and a purpose which affects the whole of his creation. Not until all that which God has

planned and purposed has been accomplished will the end come. Until that time comes our duty is clear. We should live soberly, righteously, godly. We should walk with God in our daily life and realize his presence in all that is about us. We should experience his presence in all that is within us. We should look for his coming, not when men calculate on his coming, but in that hour when no man looks for him. We should look for our Lord in faith, not distrustingly but believingly. And since our Lord took such pains to impress upon us the suddenness, the stillness, and the speediness of that return, we should never doubt but that hereafter when all has been accomplished, his coming will prove to have been just as Jesus said.

CHAPTER TWO

ADVENT'S PREPARATORY PRAYER

Advent's preparatory prayer is the Collect for the Sunday next before Advent, more popularly known perhaps as the Collect for Stir-Up Sunday. The collect begins with the words "Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people." Stirring up the will means moving the will, goading it into action, releasing it from its fetters and quickening it into life. Several times in the prayer book the same thought appears as in the collect "O God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men." The truth behind all these collects is that we must have divine power to do divine service.

The Collect

> Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This prayer is no chance prayer. Be the Sundays after Trinity many or few, this particular collect must always be said on the Sunday immediately preceding the Advent season. The Lord is coming. We must be ready to meet him. Not like the five foolish virgins who took no oil in their vessels but like the five wise ones who had ample grace within their hearts. Even these slumbered and slept. So even the most faithful need to be awakened from indifference and forgetfulness. They need to be stirred up into action, into watchfulness and readiness. The collect prays for this awakening: That we may bring forth in our lives those spiritual qualities which will

enable us to enjoy Advent's hope and comfort and make us worthy to receive our Master's commendation at his appearing.

A phrase in the collect to be noted is *We beseech thee, O Lord.* This is an appeal to God and not an exhortation to man. It is an appeal to a power outside of ourselves and greater than our own, we having no power within ourselves to enable us to rise above our dead selves. Even the power to pray comes from God as does the will to do. Both spring from God's grace implanted in the soul.

The word *beseech* tells us how we pray. This is no mere asking but a supplication. We are imploring God. The reason we can importunate God in this prayer is because our petition is in accordance with God's will for us. Prayer never changes God's will, never bends his purposes to ours, it only brings God's will and ours together and in that meeting our share is absolute surrender and God's share is the gift of himself.

The prayer is for the stirring up of the wills of God's *faithful* people. The prayer is therefore limited in scope. The word *faithful* means one who has the faith of God within his soul and includes many sinners as well as many saints. If the term excluded all but saints the Church would never pray for the *faithful* departed that they may be absolved from all their sins. The term excludes only the damned. These have to be left to the mercy of God. Prayers for these would be useless since prayer never changes the will of God.

We know if we are numbered among God's people or not. We may know that we deserve much punishment for our sins but that does not alter the fact that we know when we are God's. So long as we have a desire towards him we are his. For the moment we may be driven by lust and passion, steeped in ignorance, cruelty and vice, but so long as we desire God we are numbered among his own. While it is true that we may fall away from God, it is equally true that in baptism we became members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

The Fruit

The prayer's first objective is that we may bring forth plenteously the *fruit* of good works. Thus the stirring up of the will is to issue forth in righteous living, and unless it does issue forth in righteous living there is no justification for stirring up the will at all. The word *stir* is related to the word *steer* which means to direct, to guide, to govern, and the word as used in the collect has but one objective in mind, the holy objective of bringing forth the *fruit* of good works.

Lest we confuse the two, we should notice that the *fruit* of good works is not synonymous with the good works themselves. The fruit is the outcome of all the Holy Spirit's striving within our souls and is by far the most important in God's eyes. The fruit is godliness, that which we sometimes call Christlikeness or holiness. As for good works these are all those good things which we sum up under spiritual and corporal works of mercy. The prophet Micah sums them up when he says, "God hath showed thee, O Man, what is good and what he requires of thee, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God." Paul tells us that everything we do must be shot through with love. We think of good works as works done within the Church, prayers said within the home, and projects undertaken for the good of mankind. Our Lord gives us the standard of perfect living when he tells us that we must love God with every faculty of our beings and our neighbors more than we love ourselves.

The collect prays that we may bring forth *plenteously* the fruit of good works. *Plenteous* means abundant or fully sufficient, the latter being the more correct definition. We may therefore transpose the prayer to read, "Bringing forth the fruit of good works in full sufficiency." To bring forth in full sufficiency does not necessarily mean that we will bring forth all good and perfect works. It allows room for our tendency to sin, and takes cognizance of our human weaknesses and frailties. It does not rise to the perfect standard set by Christ but it does look forward to

the harvesting of such fruits as will merit our Lord's commendation: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

The Reward

A plenteous reward is the second objective in this prayer—"May *by thee* be plenteously rewarded." By the words *by thee* we must understand the reward is from God. We ourselves will never merit the reward, it is God's free gift to us. We receive it through Christ. We will receive it simply because God will not calculate his advances to us in proportion to our attainments towards him. God will admit us to his heart for Jesus' sake, imperfect and unworthy though we are. By plenteous reward the prayer does not simply ask for a reward but for a fully sufficient reward—*that by thee we may be rewarded in full sufficiency.*

Doubtless there will be rewards bestowed by Christ which will consist of appointments to positions and work of more or less importance in the coming kingdom of Christ on earth. "Have thou authority over ten cities"—"five cities" Luke 19:17. "Well done, good and faithful servant, . . . I will set thee over many things" Matthew 25-23. But no such rewards are contemplated in this prayer. The reward prayed for is not a reward as men count reward nor anything that might even be compared to material possessions. The prayer is on a much higher plane than that, it has to do with spiritual perfection and admittance into the kingdom of heaven. The reward sought is a reward of spiritual growth, and the prayer asks God to make all he possibly can of our souls.

That we may be *plenteously rewarded*, that is, fully and sufficiently rewarded. Fully sufficient for what? What intelligible meaning can we put upon an ample spiritual reward? Ample for what? To answer such a question we must remember that the prayer is a prelude to the Advent season which looks forward to our Lord's coming. As the Advent hymn puts it:

> Hark! a thrilling voice is sounding;
> Christ is nigh, it seems to say.

Our reward must be amply sufficient to cover that coming, let him come how he may, as Christ the Child or as Christ the Judge.

Our reward must cover judgment day or it will not be a plenteous reward. We must be able to meet the Lord with joy and not with fear and trembling; we must be able to stand among the redeemed for whom there is no condemnation; we must be able to see the King in his beauty and rejoice and sing. Our reward must be fully sufficient to cover our eternal union with Christ or it will not be a plenteous reward. When Christ comes again the bodies of his followers will be changed, and part of the Christian's reward will be a glorified and immortal body. This will be a reward indeed, and it will surpass all that we desire or deserve. But, there is one thing more that an ample reward must cover to make our happiness complete in heaven, it must cover beatific service. To be perfectly happy in heaven we must have the will and the power to eternally do God's will. Strange as it may now seem, our greatest joy in heaven will come from doing beatific service. As Bickersteth says in his hymn: "To do the will of Jesus, this is rest."

Advent's preparatory prayer closes with the words, "Through Jesus Christ our Lord." This ending to the collect means that the church's prayer is made in the name of Christ, whose will and desire it is that we should inherit his kingdom.

CHAPTER THREE

ADVENT'S CALLS

As each Advent season rolls around the Church first prays its preparatory prayer: *Stir up, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people,* and then calls upon its members to repent, to prepare, to watch. These are all preparatory exhortations characterizing Advent and calling Christians to action. The calls are in the prayer book. The first two are appointed for recitation before Morning Prayer, the third is to be said at Evening Prayer. The sentences are to be found in the scriptures:

> Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
>
> Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
>
> Watch ye, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or the cockcrowing, or in the morning.

There is a fourth call to worship or perhaps we might rather call it a glad cry of jubilation bidding us all to come and to join in with all God's children in a song of adoration to the returning Lord. This is called the Invitatory and is to be found just before the Venite in Morning Prayer. The rubric says it should be said or sung during Advent. The words are not a direct quotation from the bible but do sum up its obvious meaning, and read:

> Our King and Saviour draweth nigh;
> O come, let us adore him.

In ancient times this invitatory was repeated as a refrain in whole or in part after each verse of the Venite. When sung that way, especially when sung antiphonally by the choir in the chancel answering the choir in the nave loft, the combination makes a beautiful and impressive Advent anthem.

Repent Ye

Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. We all need this annual call to repentance. We need it because we are overmuch occupied with the world and with the common task. We need it because we forget to keep the daily tryst with Christ. We need it because sin finds lodgment in our souls. We need it because we delay the coming of the kingdom of God. We need it because we shall soon have to give an account for the things done in the flesh.

But repentance is only the beginning. It is only the first step in renewal and purification. Without repentance we cannot approach God, we cannot know God, we cannot serve God. Repentance is the first step back towards God. This agrees with the scripture which reads: "Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord."

Repentance is not an end in itself. Repentance must go on into service, to the bringing forth of fruits worthy of repentance. These help to undo the evil effects of sin, breaking down the strongholds of Satan and ushering in the day of peace. These fruits are allied to those which grow upon the tree of life whose leaves are set for the healing of the nations.

The reason why we should repent and repent bitterly is because our wilfulness keeps the world in bondage to Satan, bringing down God's judgments upon the earth, causing untold sufferings to our fellows, limiting our capacity for good, and keeping Christ himself out of his kingdom.

The end of repentance looks towards reunion with God because the kingdom of heaven is at hand. God's heavenly kingdom is just behind the veil, waiting for us to greet its dawning. Far too many Christians wait for God to

usher in its dawning instead of getting down to the task of ushering it in themselves. It is perfectly true that the great day of the Lord awaits the Lord's coming but it is equally true that it awaits our preparations for its coming, too.

Prepare Ye

Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Preparation is a call to be up and doing. It involves work. There is no provision here for sitting down and doing nothing while awaiting the Lord's return. The call is to action, to be on the job early and late. The shortness of Advent symbolizes the shortness of the time in which we have to do anything.

Preparation must be made within our own selves first. Everything must be in order there. Nothing must be left to chance. Evil must be expelled, indifference displaced, righteousness installed. Then there is work to be done all about us. Prayers must be said, worship provided for, good works attended to. We must prepare the way for the Master's coming.

The call to prepare first came through Moses and the prophets then it was taken up by John the Baptist by the river Jordan who cried aloud, Make ye ready for his coming. John's life exemplifies what preparation means. John denied himself, did good to his neighbors, gave up his life for the Gospel. His mantle has fallen upon us, now we must prepare for the Lord's coming, come what may.

The Way of the Lord is the Lord's way of life, a way of life foreign to millions of souls. Into these souls, likened unto the desert for barrenness, we are to build a highway for our God. In doing this the lowly will be raised up and the proud humbled, the crooked will be made to go straight and the warlike tamed. Then shall the earth rejoice and the desolate be made glad because this highway is the Holy Way. The unclean cannot travel upon it but the wayfaring man—he who walks upon it—even though he be simple minded cannot go astray upon it.

He, in whose name we build this highway, is declared by Isaiah to be the Branch—born of David's line, springing from the roots of Jesse. The reason we build in his name is because he is destined to usher in that ideal world prayed for by saints and martyrs. The time of its coming is prophesied by the same prophet to be when the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Of all the mysteries of God perhaps none is more mysterious than this, that Christ should make his coming to reign in the souls of men dependent upon our efforts. It is as though the redemption of the world cannot culminate in the glorious coming of Christ until everyone of us becomes—Alter Christus—another Christ.

Watch Ye

Watch ye, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh. Jesus also says, "Be ye also ready for in the hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh." Nothing is more emphatic than this command to watch and nothing has been more consistent than the Church's expectation of Christ's return. Ever since the risen Lord vanished from the apostles' sight into the bright clouds of heaven the Church has waited and watched for his return. In our turn we must watch, and watch patiently.

To watch means to be on the look out so that we may welcome the Master the moment he appears. It means being on the alert lest we lie down in sin and so have to cry Mercy instead of Hosanna. It means being ready for work in the morning and ready for sleep at night, having a conscience void of offence ready for the judgment let it come when it may. It means being not caught off guard, not found napping in a moment of forgetfulness.

To watch means to do our daily task a little more carefully, a little more honestly, a little more self-sacrificingly. It means putting more love into what we do, more consideration into what we say. It means showing more sympathy to the afflicted, more mercy to the erring, more pity to the oppressed.

We watch unto the Lord when we watch out for the material and spiritual welfare of our fellows, when we keep at our appointed tasks, when we do our work in the spirit of service, when we try to make earth a little more like heaven. Such watching is never in vain. It blesses others and has its own particular influence upon our own souls. Even though the sun rises and sets and he for whom the Church watches does not come, the soul that watches for his coming will not be disappointed.

So often have men thought watching meant simply waiting. Some have given up their employment thinking they would work no more. Others have given away their goods thinking they would use them no more. Still others have entered into the Church simply to pray. Such waiting is not watching. We watch unto the Lord when we watch out for his children. An engineer on a locomotive does not sit down to await journey's end but watches the track before him lest harm come to his passengers. So too, we best fulfil our Lord's command in our journey to eternity when we watch out for our fellows.

Come Ye

O come, let us adore him. This exhortation is addressed to the whole Church to gather together as one people. It is sung in connection with the Venite during Advent and very fittingly, thus turning that canticle of thanksgiving into a song of adoration to the returning Lord. It is addressed to all people because every one has reason to adore Christ for the greatness of his salvation.

Many of us have very special personal reasons for adoring Christ, too. Reasons for adoring him which other people could not possibly understand except in so far as their experiences tally with our own. There is the long record of God's loving kindness and mercy, of sins forgiven, of grace restored. There is the long record of God's patiences, of his deliverances from evil, of merciful guidances, of prayers answered, of comfortings and sustainings. God has fed us from the first day until now, and we know we are where we are because of God's

providence, and because of his providence alone. Then, in common with others, we have passed from death unto life. This we know because we love the brethren, as Saint John says.

We all have reason for adoring the returning Lord because he brings with him the assurances of our salvation. His coming marks the consummation of all our hopes and dreams, the beginning of an entirely new existence in an incorruptible, transformed and glorified body. Here our bodies carry with them the marks and scars of our earthliness. They are stained with sinful thoughts and sinful deeds. They bear the impress of desires and passions which should have been tamed and muzzled but which have not been. In heaven our bodies will not bear these marks and scars anymore but will be pure and dazzling, bright with immortal beauty.

But perhaps the most profound of all reasons for adoring the coming Christ are to be found in the clauses of the Venite for these apply to all men at all times. We adore him because he is a great King above all gods:

> In whose hands are all the corners of the earth, the strength of the hills is his also.
>
> The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands prepared the dry land.

Here we adore the coming Christ as the creator of heaven and earth, but the Venite recounts an even greater reason for adoration than that. As Christians we never cease thinking of Him as our Saviour and never tire of hearing him say, "I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Thus it is that here in the Venite we worship and fall down, and kneel before him as Redeemer:

> For he is the Lord our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hands.

The crowning reason, however, for adoring him and for worshipping him in all the beauty of a holy life is because he cometh to rectify all wrongs and to establish all that is right.

> For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; and with righteousness to judge the world, and the peoples with his truth.

There is no greater reason than this because without righteousness and truth no paradise would be heaven. Indeed, it is the very lack of these things on earth which makes it such a place of sin and suffering.

CHAPTER FOUR

ADVENT'S URGENCY

There is a note of urgency in Advent not in any other season of the Christian year. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Tomorrow may never come. We who dream of doing tomorrow what we should do today may never see tomorrow's dawning. God may say to us what he said to the man who thought he had time to really live, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

The clock of life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just where the hands will stop
At late or early hour.

The present only is our own,
Live, love, toil with a will
Place no faith in "tomorrow" for
The clock may then be still.

Advent sounds this note of warning. It says, The sands of time are sinking, eternity is near at hand, and soon, very soon our place in heaven or hell will be determined forever. We may make of this life what we will but death closes our choice and then we go down into the grave leaving behind us influences to bless or plague the world.

The World Needs A Saviour

Advent's urgency consists in the fact that the world has gone astray and is very godless and needs Christ. It needs the Saviour above everything else. Better housing, better sanitation, better wages, better food, are all secondary to the world's need of the Saviour. Without him it is doomed, without him there is no peace or security, only misery and death. The world needs the Saviour be-

cause it goes its own way and not God's way, and sees good as evil and evil as good, and trusts in lies and in unrighteousness and in all manner of ungodliness. It abuses every gift, and the greater the gift the greater becomes its possible source of evil. Therefore the world needs the Saviour to save it from the dire consequences of its own folly.

We do not have to wait until judgment day to know that sin brings death. We can see sin's punishment now. All the world's suffering is due to sin. This is a hard saying but nonetheless true. "By man came sin into the world and death by sin." Indeed, we can see sin bringing death into the world. There is the death of the body, riddled with disease, vile and loathsome, due to uncleanness. To such a one our Lord said, 'Sin no more lest a worse thing come upon thee.' There is the death of the mind when this worse thing runs its course, when the afflicted one becomes a raving lunatic. And there is the death of the soul when it completes its course as blindness settles down upon the heart because it has become alienated from the life of God.

Our Lord came to seek and to save the lost. The bible tells who are lost. They who know not God. Paul tells of their plight when he speaks of them as being tied and bound by the chains of their sins. These are they that are caught in the net of their own wickedness, who are no longer free but enslaved to Satan and to sin. Some of these, like the prodigal son of old, arise and go to the Father, but not until they find wisdom through living in a pigpen. Others never find their way back to God. These may be likened unto those who in the name of success, enlightenment, progress and modernity, live without morals, ignore religion, and offend God's children until even our Lord's verdict is—Better to have never been born.

Better certainly to have never been born than to die without God, without hope, without eternal life. Yet for the want of the Saviour many go down to the grave in despair. Disillusioned and embittered they go, un-

mourned and unloved. They live their days in sin and their nights in sorrow, and their souls go out into eternity, unsanctified and unblessed.

Souls Are Dying

Advent's urgency consists in the fact that we are responsible for making the love of God known to the world. God anticipated man's need of a Saviour and sent his Son to become a sacrifice for sin. God sent and God gave, his purpose being that "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Before our Lord went up into heaven he established his Church, endowed her with means of grace, entrusted to her his way of life and gave her the Keys of the Kingdom. By rallying around the Church we enable her to become a sanctifying influence in the community and she in turn enables us to consecrate ourselves to high ideals and to doing good. Through her we enlist in the war between good and bad, and thus help to raise our fellows from the degradation of sin. In this holy war we cannot remain neutral. As Jesus himself declared, "He that is not with me is against me."

Through his Church God confers on us the privilege of helping him save human souls. It is our duty to take men to Church and to take the Church to men. Men often do not know the things which belong to their peace. They often go astray through ignorance and bad training. We are commissioned to teach them differently and to lead them into ways of peace. We know we are called to do this very thing because Christ commissioned his disciples to do it and they have passed on their commission to us.

The failure of the Church on earth is our failure. God alone knows what joy and peace, what happiness and security is lost to the world because we will not bestir ourselves in the Lord's work. Our failure to make Christ known allows ungodliness to flourish in our midst, contributes to the continuance of war, retards the millennium and delays the coming of Christ. Even now God draws near to us in blessing but cannot leave his blessing because we are not ready to receive it. So many of our

prayers have to remain unanswered because our sinful ways prevent them being answered. Knowledge has to be withheld. Secrets connected with health and healing cannot be revealed, and mercifully so, because in the hands of unscrupulous men they would become more of a curse than a blessing.

All knowledge is God's, and when we are ready to receive it we can trust God to give it. We do not create knowledge. God reveals it as we are capable of receiving it. When we look into the mysteries of nature we simply behold the treasures of Almighty God. He withholds those treasures just so long as they would prove our utter undoing. This is the truth behind those words in Genesis, "And the Lord God commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Judgment Ever Near

Advent's urgency consists in the fact that God hath said, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." This is God's law. There is no escaping it except through God's grace given by Jesus Christ. Punishment for sin is seldom remitted even though God saves our souls. We suffer for our sins individually and sometimes as a community.

Within our own lives we have seen Germany punished. She forsook the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man and followed after the false gods of race and power. She found no place for repentance, and of necessity the floodgates of hell opened out in her midst. Her filth and wickedness became manifest. The appalling depths to which she sank accounted for her ruthlessness.

What happened in Germany could happen here. Our own cup of iniquity is filled with vileness and ungodliness, and it may yet overflow to sear and blacken our fair land. God warns us of coming judgment. Germany is our warning. If we do not heed this warning, God may speak through punishment. Abraham's words addressed to Dives in hell apply here, "If they hear not Moses and

the prophets, neither will they hear if one rose from the dead." If God's judgment on Germany does not make us fear, neither will any threat from heaven frighten us short of the coming of the Son of Man in judgment.

There is no way of escaping God's wrath except through righteousness. God mercifully stayed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but only for so long as there was a sufficient number of righteous men within the city to stay the avenging hand. The moment these failed, destruction fell. Once before in the history of the world God destroyed his creation because of its unspeakable wickedness. God could not overlook it. Its degradation and sin had to be washed away. God seeing that it had to be destroyed, said to Noah: "The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." But never again will God destroy the earth by water, the next time it will be by fire, and Advent warns us that the day of judgment is near.

In recent years there has been a fearful let down in morals. Sin is laughed at, God mocked, religion despised, his holy day ignored, the commandments broken, his Church forsaken. Surely all these things portend disaster. If God could not let man go on in his sin before, neither can he let him go on now. God is no respecter of persons, he dispenses justice with an even hand. The rod of chastisement must fall, that perchance some few in their sufferings may cry unto the Lord and be saved.

The bible predicts that in the latter days grievous times will come and great tribulation be visited upon the earth, but the bible also bids the faithful to look up and to be of good cheer because the day of their redemption draws near. The great apostacy, the great falling away from the Church has come to pass, and evil days have descended upon the earth. Surely the day of God's wrath is at hand. But in that day the Lord has promised to preserve his own: "I will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is come upon the whole earth, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

CHAPTER FIVE

ADVENT IN THE COLLECTS

Collects are prayers, short prayers usually attached to portions of scripture called Epistles and Gospels. We find them in the prayer book appointed for every Sunday throughout the Christian year and for many other days too. They differ from the usual run of prayers in that they collect together the days' thoughts for which they are appointed reducing them to prayer.

There are four collects which have been especially written for Advent, one for each of the four Sundays in the season, and in these we find the thoughts which Mother Church wants us to keep in mind as we await our Lord's coming. These particular prayers are not old. The first appeared in the prayer book of 1549 and was composed to take the place of the old *Stir Up* collect used previously. The second also appeared for the first time in 1549. The third one did not appear until the prayer book of 1661 being a substitute for an old Gregorian collect. The fourth one was expanded in 1661 from the old one used in 1549. As we study these prayers we can see that the thought of our Lord's coming is put forward as an incentive for purifying the life, for reading the bible aright, for doing God's work, for running the Christian race.

Give Us Grace

The first collect is the most important of all the Advent collects in that it keynotes the season and is appointed to be read after each of the other collects every day until Christmas. It asks for grace, God's grace.

> ALMIGHTY God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal

> life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. *Amen.*

God's grace gives supernatural life to the soul. It steals down from heaven in answer to our prayers making us children of God and enabling us to perform works meet for heaven. It remains within the soul so long as mortal sin does not make it disappear. We call it *sanctifying grace* because it alone and nothing else renders a soul pure and holy in the sight of God.

Grace affects the heart as well as the will. It has to do with charity, the love of God; as well as with ghostly strength, the spirit both to will and to do God's pleasure. It is like heaven in the soul, causing the heart to love God and the things of God, and bestowing upon the will the power to do good works.

In the collect grace is sought to cast away the works of darkness. The works of darkness are those evil things which Saint Paul enumerates under the works of the flesh, "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like." In this list we find not only adultery and fornication which are works of the flesh, but also hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings and such like, which are works of darkness indeed.

The collect also seeks grace to put on the armor of light. To put on the armor of light means being endued with spiritual understanding. The thought here differs somewhat from the thought expressed in the whole armor of God mentioned in Ephesians 6, with its breastplate of righteousness and helmet of salvation. In this collect the

armor of light signifies the protection that spiritual insight affords its possessor. The spirit of understanding, referred to here as the armor of light, is one of the gifts given in confirmation enabling the soul to see and to see clearly, not by processes of human reasoning but through the infused light of the Holy Spirit, the moral issues involved in any course of action.

The grace sought in the collect is for this present life—*now in this mortal life.* There is not the slightest suggestion here of waiting until the last moment before calling upon God or of trying to slip into heaven like a penitent thief, or of taking the chance that God will freely forgive everybody at the last. The thought is rather that to secure heaven we must let grace dwell in our hearts now.

Our Blessed Hope

The Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent is a prayer that we may take and keep hold of our blessed hope. This is done through patience, and patience comes from "comforting," that is, from the strengthening power of God's holy Word. It will help to clarify the meaning of this collect if we separate the words *by patience* from what follows, reading not *patience and comfort* but *by patience, and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace* . . . the blessed hope.

The collect calls immortal life our blessed hope, and the bible sets it before us as our great prize, the pearl of great price, the attainment of which is worth every trial and tribulation, no payment being too great to pay for it, even life itself being unworthy to be compared with it.

> BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlast-

ing life, which thou hast given us in
our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

The bible was written for the nurture of our souls. It was not written to be used as a charm or talisman or to be used in any other illegitimate or superstitious way. Many readers miss the purpose for which the bible was written, but those never miss it who keep their hearts and minds fixed upon the blessed hope of everlasting life. To nurture our souls the collect teaches us to pray that we may use the scriptures in five different ways—*hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.*

Hear them. The bible is placed upon the lectern in the chancel where all may see it and hear what is read therefrom. When the lessons are read we should listen to them attentively and reverently. To *hear* means to give ear to, to heed, to take warning, to obey. Only that may be questioned which is spoken from the pulpit, not that which is read from the bible. God caused the holy scriptures to be written for our learning and it is for us to hear and to understand.

Read. This means consistent daily reading. The occasional or haphazard reading of the average churchgoer is of doubtful value, his reading being too superficial. He experiences no comfort from it, sees none of its beauties, tastes none of its sweetness. The bible is a means of grace and when we read it devotionally we find in it great blessing.

Mark. This does not mean underlying scripture verses with pencil markings but really noting what they say as we meditate upon them. They tell us our duty. They contain a wisdom which is not of this world and from this we can gather inspiration and consolation.

Learn. Here the meaning is to master the scriptures as we master an art. The thought of memorizing them is secondary. It is good to memorize bible portions but mere memorizing is not enough, we need to know their meanings and be able to apply them to ourselves under any circumstances.

Inwardly digest them· This means really taking the scriptures to heart and living by them as we live by the food we eat. It is to let God's holy Word dwell in us richly, letting it become food for our souls. Mere proficiency in bible knowledge is not enough, such proficiency without bible culture will leave us unpleasing to God.

Zeal for Souls

The Collect for the Third Sunday in Advent teaches us to consider others and to work for their salvation. It makes an excellent intercession for all who attempt any work for God, keeping before our minds as it does not only the ultimate object of all church work—the reign of Christ in the souls of men—but also the spirit in which we are to serve God, the spirit of John the Baptist.

> O LORD Jesus Christ, who at thy first coming didst send thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee; Grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit ever, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

Advent tells us to prepare and make ready for the coming of the Lord, the collect teaches us how best to do this. We best prepare for his coming by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Obviously Jesus cannot come in the truest sense until all hearts are open to receive him. The disobedient are those who disobey and keep on disobeying. These must be converted, they must hate the things they once loved and love the things they once hated. These must be taught

the wickedness of their ways until they repent, confess, go to church, do good instead of evil. To turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just means to turn their hearts heavenward. It is to get them to behold, and to keep on beholding Jesus on the cross until they accept his righteousness for their own. This is the wisdom of heaven, not of earth. It is the same old offence of the cross which Saint Paul affirms brings salvation. It tells men not to trust in man's wisdom or in what man's wisdom may devise, but to trust in the Lord Jesus and in his way of life.

To be an acceptable people at our Lord's second coming we must be zealous for souls with the zeal of John the Baptist. "Grant that . . . the stewards of thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way . . . that we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight." The *we* in the collect refers to all God's children as well as to the clergy. The standard by which we are to judge our zeal for Christ is not the zealousness of some churchworker we happen to know but that of John the Baptist. Unless we labor in his spirit there is a danger that we may not be found acceptable in his sight.

Grace and Mercy

The fourth collect is an urgent prayer for God's bountiful grace and mercy. The Advent collects start off by asking for grace, now that is not enough, they now ask for bountiful grace and mercy. Here is the language of a soul which recognizes the enormity of its sin and the awful degradation of its wickedness. Nothing less than the mighty power of God will suffice.

> O LORD, raise up, we pray thee, thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may

> speedily help and deliver us; through the satisfaction of thy Son our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

To be *sore let and hindered* means to be slowed down from within and embarrassed from without. The word *let* comes from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning to make late. We are sore *let* because we are tied in body and mind to the evil things we have done. Our sins may have been freely forgiven but they still affect the body and torment the mind. We are chained to them. We are held back by the crippling associations our sins have formed. Other peoples' sins affect us but our own sins affect us still more. The sins which hold us back are our own sins. The things we have deliberately done. We remember doing them and their memory is both painful and shameful. Our wickedness holds us back too. This is the tendency of the heart because sin has been allowed to remain upon it unrepented and unconfessed. The heart was not wicked once but we have made it so by not keeping God in our thoughts and by not keeping his love within our hearts.

The words, *O Lord, raise up thy power and come among us,* are a reference to our Lord's coming again, not as a weakling child but in power, and the reason for our praying this prayer is in order that his *bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us.* The reason for asking for bountiful grace is because mercy helps but does not save. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." Mercy gives the second chance. Mercy stays the avenging hand. This mercy can do but beyond this mercy cannot go. It is grace that saves. Grace is the sure guarantee of eternal life. If we die saved we die, not in a state of mercy, but in a state of grace. And in this collect we plead for deliverance through bountiful grace, which is grace that is full and free and overflowing.

CHAPTER SIX

ADVENT IN THE EPISTLES

There are four Advent Epistles all of which are admirably suited to inculcate the teaching of practical piety in a world waiting for the coming of the Lord. Heart and mind are encouraged to dwell in heaven, the body must remain on earth. One thought sums up the teachings of these epistles and that thought is consecration, the living of a heavenly life under earthly conditions.

THE EPISTLE. ROMANS 13:8

OWE no man any thing, but to love one another for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,

and make not provision for the flesh,
to fulfill the lusts thereof.

This first epistle says, Be loving. We are not to be in debt to anyone but to be self-respecting and self-sustaining. We are to stand on our own feet, work with our own hands, earn our own living, pay our own way. The apostle puts it this way, "Owe no man anything but to love one another." This means that while we must not owe any man anything, we must always consider ourselves indebted to others because of what Christ has done for us. We must pay our debt to Christ in love to our fellows.

Love marks us as children of God; but we have no love of our own to give to our fellows, it comes from God. It steals down from heaven in the form of grace as we kneel humbly in prayer. As we pray our hearts are softened, malice and bitterness disappear, love and tenderness take their place. When we are negligent in our prayers, it is hard to see how any grace is maintained in our souls. Bunyan tells us how. In his picture of the devil trying to extinguish the fire of grace in our souls, Bunyan shows a man with a vessel of oil in his hand. This man is Christ, who continually with the oil of his grace maintains the work already begun in the heart so that the souls of his people prove gracious still.

The Lord's coming is put forward in this epistle as an incentive to holier living. The thought is, Time is flying, judgment is near; cease to do evil, learn to do well. The Lord's coming is put forward as a prod and a quickener to make us live more honorably, more nobly, more thoughtfully. Certainly the surest way to be like Christ is by thinking about him. Hence the apostle directs our minds to his coming, assured that the thought will lead to holier living.

This epistle is not a call to an ascetic life but to an honest-to-goodness following of Christ. Saint Paul bids us not to make provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts. This means that we should not pamper the body nor

make it the be-all and end-all of existence. God expects us to provide for our legitimate needs and to use foresight in providing for old age, but he does not want us to mistrust his bountiful providence nor to be consumed with anxious thoughts about the future.

The Epistle. Romans 15:4

Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, for this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

This Epistle for the Second Sunday in Advent says, Be hopeful. For a complete understanding of how hopeful we should be would necessitate a going back in the bible to a thought expressed before our epistle begins. That thought being that a weak brother must not be despaired of but must be cared for and looked after and brought into the kingdom of God. Nothing must make us unhopeful of a brother's redemption.

The scriptures were written for our learning, that is for our benefit. Through the strength and certainty we derive from their reading, we must endure all the difficulties of laboring among weak brethren with patience. As God with patience and longsuffering bore with us so must we be patient and longsuffering towards others. As God put up with all our wilfulness and sin so must we show likemindedness towards others. We must transmit God's comfort to others, that is, give God's strength to them, literally be a source of strength mingled with tenderness.

When our Lord answered Peter's question as to how often he should forgive his brother, our Lord's verdict was not seven times but seventy times seven. Saint Paul's thought is here much the same. As regards the weak brother, we must do and keep on doing, hopeful to the end. We must overlook ingratitude and unfaithfulness time and time again, extending a helping hand here and giving comfort there even when it is least merited. The weak and erring brother must never be driven away but must ever be encouraged to join in Christian fellowship. As Christ died for us and carried us in his bosom to the Father, so must we die for others and carry them in our fellowship to Christ.

A somewhat obscure thought in this epistle is the one relating to the praising of God by Gentiles. That obscurity disappears when we remember that Paul was a Jew and a believer in the promise that through Israel all the nations of the earth should be blessed. For this blessing the Gentiles had something to thank God for. Moreover, the riches of the Jew—Jesus and his gospel—had be-

come the riches of the Gentile. This was nothing to be discouraged about but rather a matter for rejoicing. Israel's rejection of Christ was nothing to be daunted about. God was not daunted by it. With or without Israel God was blessing the world. The old testament prophets foresaw that Jesus would spring from the root of Jesse, foresaw his rejection by Israel, foresaw the Gentile acceptance of him, foresaw that blessings intended for the Jew would fall to the lot of the Gentile, therefore they bade the Gentiles rejoice.

Saint Paul closes this epistle with a prayer that his readers will be filled with all joy and peace in believing. In believing in what? Evidently in hope, in salvation to the uttermost, no one being hopeless in view of Christ. Since God is not appalled by his rebellious creation neither should we be over the weaknesses of our brethren. No one is hopeless, not even the Jew. When Christ comes again to ascend the throne of David even the Jews will acknowledge him King of kings and Lord of lords.

THE EPISTLE. 1 CORINTHIANS 4:1

LET a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

The Epistle for the Third Sunday in Advent says, Be faithful. It concerns faithful stewardship and applies to all who do any work for God. Perhaps every Christian worker feels himself exposed to four judgments as regards his work—that of his friends, that of the world, that of himself, that of God. The epistle tells us what estimate to put upon these judgments. For the first two we should care very little. For our own judgment we should feel real concern lest it reflects God's judgment on us. Of God's judgment we should stand in awe, lest our work will be shown to be a humbug and a fraud in that day when every man's work will be revealed for what it is.

There is only one proper motive for doing church work and that is to please God—for Jesus' sake. This is the only right motive, and when we serve God from this motive alone we are not overmuch concerned about the opinions of our fellows. Paul was not concerned with what his neighbors thought. He said their opinions did not matter. The work was God's, and God alone was capable of judging it. It is right here that most of us fail. So much we do we do for applause, and when we do not get applauded we get discouraged.

The words of the apostle are very striking. They reveal his inner mind. He says, "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not myself. For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord." In saying "I judge not mine own self," Paul did not mean that he was incompetent to judge himself, he did not mean that he never judged himself, Paul must have done this very thing for he says 'I know nothing against myself.' But, the fact that Paul's own conscience did not condemn him did not justify him, he knew God could see many things hidden from Paul's own eyes.

Judge nothing before the time commands us not to sit in judgment on any man. The justice of this command lies in the fact that there are always too many unknown

factors to judge any man justly. We cannot see noble aspirations or weigh pure motives or know what seed will bring forth late fruit. When the Lord comes we shall be able to judge for he will reveal the hidden things of the heart.

For all that this epistle is so short it is a very comforting one. Its message to all who have become discouraged in God's work is, Do not be discouraged; judge nothing before Christ comes; keep right on working; believe in him who has called you and believe in the work he has given you to do; believe that when Christ comes he will take every difficulty into consideration and that all your faithful work, all your honest efforts, all your pure motives, all your noble aspirations will be properly assessed and properly rewarded.

THE EPISTLE. PHILIPPIANS 4:4

> REJOICE in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The Epistle for the Fourth Sunday in Advent says, Be joyful. *Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, rejoice.* Paul's outward circumstances did not warrant this glad cry. He was under the shadow of death in a prison cell but in spite of his approaching martyrdom the prevailing note of this epistle is joy. The joy sprang out from Paul's heart, out from his feelings of love and thankfulness, out from his confidence and delight in God's mercies. Paul rejoiced in Christ. Paul bids us rejoice in him too, and we should rejoice for our blessings in him are manifold. But

the apostle goes on to couple up this duty to God with a duty to man. He tells us to be patient and forbearing to all men.

Let your moderation be known unto all men. This means let them know it experimentally. We should let our Christian light shine out and not hide it under a bushel. Men should see the fruits of Christian belief in our hearts. They should see that we speak kindly and judge kindly and they should experience in their lives our self-restraint and gentleness. Our moderation should also be seen in our detachment from earth and our attachment to heaven. But moderation is no easy virtue. It takes much forbearance to be gentle under all provocations. The epistle suggests help in the words *The Lord is at hand.* If we take these words to mean that the Lord is by our side, that is at hand, the thought of his presence will help to check the angry word and the ungracious act; or, if we think of the words as meaning that the Lord will soon be here, then they will help us to remember that earthly things are not of primary importance.

In the words *Be careful for nothing,* the apostle gives man a duty to himself. This seems an impossible task and yet it is simply another phrasing of our Lord's command, 'Take no thought for the morrow.' And what a wise command. We should not brood over things until we are consumed by them. To do so is only to embitter present happiness with the recollection of past wrongs or with the fear of coming ills. To brood over things is sinful in that it shows a lack of faith in God. The sure cure for worry is in more trust in God, is in more casting of care upon Him, is in more believing that he cares, is in more remembering that Christ is near. The epistle bids us pray about the things that tend to worry us, and not only about them but about other things too. It says, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make your requests known unto God." The reason is simple. Care cannot find the peace we seek but prayer can make our souls receptive to receive it.

Our Lord promised peace to the prayerful soul. He

promised it to his disciples with great solemnity the night he died. After telling them to believe in him he said, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." This peace passes understanding because its power cannot be understood by the mind. It is indescribable because the world cannot receive it. Yet this peace keeps the soul, sustains it, guards it, supports it in every crisis of life. This is the peace which has helped martyrs to go singing to their deaths as they suffered persecution for righteousness sake.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ADVENT IN THE GOSPELS

All the Advent Gospels have to do with the coming of the Lord. The first tells of his coming on the first Palm Sunday into Jerusalem, the second recounts the things which must happen before the Lord returns, in the third the Baptist wants to be assured that Messiah has really come, and in the fourth John proclaims that a greater than he has already come and is standing in their midst.

THE GOSPEL. MATTHEW 21:1

WHEN they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes

> that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Who is this coming? is the question asked in the Gospel for the First Sunday in Advent. The multitude who entered Jerusalem with Jesus answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth." As though anticipating that reply, Jesus had looked down upon the city and had prophesied its destruction, an event which took place forty years later with the loss of one million lives and the captivity of some four hundred thousand more. The question was a very natural one. Many in the city doubtless did not know Jesus although his name must have been on every lip. Perhaps they should have known the sign of his coming. Those who did understand it gave Jesus homage, they spread their garments in the way and waved palm branches at his approach, crying:

> Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest.

Who is this coming? This is Jesus, not only the prophet of Nazareth but the one destined to fulfil all prophecy.

This is he who said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil." And in these very Advent gospels there are several instances in which our Lord set out purposely to fulfil the predictions of the prophets. The first gospel says our Lord entered Jerusalem to fulfil the sign given by the prophet Zechariah:

> Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

Who is this coming? This is our judge. As soon as Jesus reached the holy city he went into the temple to cast out those who traded in it. Quoting Isaiah he said, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer but ye have made it a den of thieves." Here judgment begins in the house of God where it must always begin. It should not be supposed that the traffic at the temple was any more corrupt than any similar traffic in the marketplace, the point is that no corruption must ever be permitted in the house of God. All must be holy there, if not, it must be purged. By entering the temple and assuming authority there, Jesus anticipated his message to the seven churches in the apocalypse that he will purge his church and keep it holy.

THE GOSPEL. LUKE. 21:25

> AND there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall

> be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you. This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

This Gospel for the Second Sunday in Advent tells of happenings in heaven and earth preceding our Lord's coming again in the clouds of heaven. Pointing to the temple Jesus had said, "Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down," a prophecy which was fulfilled to the letter in A. D. 70. Then it was that the disciples asked him what should be the sign of his coming. This gospel is our Lord's answer. He speaks very generally, describing what has been true of every century since he was upon earth. He speaks of wars, pestilences, famines, and false prophets.

Saint Matthew in his Gospel enlarges somewhat on this account as given by Saint Luke and says that just before our Lord returns to judge the world the sign of the Son of man shall appear in the sky. What this sign will be no one knows but when it appears its meaning will doubtless be just as clear as was the meaning of our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem. The words, "This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled," should

not be understood to mean that our Lord expected the end of the world in that generation. The word *genea* used in the bible means race as well as generation. *This race shall not pass away.* In view of the oft attempted extirpation of the Jews, the sentence should be understood to mean that the Jews will survive all persecution and will exist as a race of people to the end of time.

Here in this gospel where men's hearts fail them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth, our Lord tells his followers not to fear nor to be afraid. He says, "When ye begin to see these things begin to come to pass look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." Our Lord does not say, Wait until they are accomplished before looking up, but *when they begin to come to pass.* The reason is because he was teaching a present duty. Their fulfilment began even before Christ's crucifixion.

This is one of those practical religious duties that apply to us all. We are to look up. Our help is in God. The bible words literally translated mean looking up with outstretched neck. Lifting up our heads means to take heart and to live expectantly, and to see in every strange event a movement of the hand of God. God is working his purpose out. God is redeeming his own creation. And to know that *your redemption draweth nigh* is to be assured that time is fast running out, that the end will not be delayed, that deliverance is on its way, that Christ will soon come in his glory, that we shall all then be taken home to dwell forever in the house of the Lord with all those whose robes are washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

The Gospel. Matthew 11:2

NOW when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John

> again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

The Gospel for the Third Sunday in Advent tells of John the Baptist being in prison for denouncing Herod's ungodly way of life, and how that while languishing there he sent his disciples to Jesus to question him concerning his Messiahship. We are not told why John asked these questions. It may have been because his own faith was wavering or it may have been to strengthen his disciples' faith, but in any case his question was a very human one. The proof of this lies in the fact that we are always looking for more assurance, for some more persuasive religion, for some more evident theology instead of finding and serving God right where we are.

Our Lord's answer was very kind, just the sort of an answer we would have expected him to give, gracious and satisfying. He turned the Baptist's thoughts to the Old Testament prophets and told him that their predictions were being fulfilled before his very eyes. But we

must not suppose that this was all that Jesus said to John. It is only the gist of it, the important part, that which the writer saw was the most vital. Our Lord's answer was far kindlier than appears on the surface. It presents our Lord as the fulfiller of prophecy. Isaiah had said, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." Thus it would happen when Messiah came and thus it was happening now. No other words could have spoken more positively of Christ's claim to the Messiahship. This was the assurance the Baptist wanted to hear. With such assurance he could face death without fear or trepidation. The answer satisfied him, for these works of Jesus were the recognized signs of Messiah's coming.

One other thing Jesus told John, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." These words were meant to be words of cheer in pain. John would be able to judge what they meant. He must have known that Christ let him remain in prison for the Gospel's sake. And blessed are we when we remember our Lord's words. They give us help and comfort when our cross hangs heavy, when our witnessing calls for sacrifice, when we find that we cannot go to heaven on beds of ease.

As John's disciples went away Jesus asked the bystanders what they thought of John. They had seen John's ascetic life, his consistent testimony and unflagging zeal. Did they think such a man would recant or run away when trouble came? John was not a reed in the wind. John was no trickster either, for tricksters making money do not choose the path of suffering. Did they see in John a prophet? Perhaps they did, but they did not know his real identity. John was the forerunner, the man of whom Malachi wrote, "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

THE GOSPEL· JOHN 1:19

THIS is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The Gospel for the Fourth Sunday in Advent proclaims that Messiah has come. It is the witness of John the Baptist to the Godhead of Christ when Pharisees came asking him if he were not some great one. All Israel expected Messiah to come, expected the fulfilment of the promise that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head, and seeing John's ascetic character and hearing his denunciation of their wickedness and his cries of "Flee from the wrath to come," they asked him

if he himself were not the Messiah. We smile at the question until we remember that within living memory we ourselves have looked for the coming of Messiah in evolution, in education, in science, and now in social planning. Each in its turn has promised to bring in a new heaven and a new earth.

John told the Pharisees that he was not the Christ. He told them he disclaimed all claim to greatness. He said he was only a voice crying in the wilderness. No man ever so clearly pointed men away from himself, and no man ever so clearly pointed men to Christ. He was the first to say, *Behold, the Lamb of God.* This example is so difficult to follow. We have so little humility. We so love to think we are somebody, so love to hear about what we have done, so love to hear ourselves praised, and yet to keep on pointing to Christ and away from ourselves is our Christian duty.

After disclaiming all claim to greatness John said, "But there standeth one among you whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe latchet I am unworthy to unloose." These words reveal the Pharisees' blindness to the presence of Christ. But we are equally blind. Christ comes and stands beside us. He comes in Church and sacrament. He comes in goodness and in love. He comes in suffering and in death but so often we fail to recognize him. The ever-coming Christ is always about us guiding, sustaining, helping, but we seldom know he is near. He speaks through pain and conscience but we seldom hear his voice. If Christ is not real to us now, what reality can he have for us hereafter? If we cannot see Christ, love him, speak with him in our hearts now, what reason have we for wanting to see him, love him, speak with him when he comes again. This fourth gospel warns us against the blindness of the Pharisees lest we shall be unable to see our dear Lord when he comes again.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ADVENT LESSONS—OLD TESTAMENT

Of the two lessons appointed to be read daily at both Morning and Evening Prayer, the first is always chosen from the Old Testament or from the Apocrypha. The reason why the Old Testament is read side by side with our own specifically Christian scriptures is because it is part of God's holy Word. The Old Testament looks forward to Christ, the New Testament reveals him. That the Old Testament looks forward to Christ is evidenced by reading through Isaiah. This book would have little meaning were it not for the Lord Jesus. Only Christ gives it meaning. That is why Isaiah is sometimes called the fifth evangelist. We cannot open the book anywhere without finding some reference to the coming of Christ's kingdom. It is as though Isaiah saw in one grand view the panorama of things to come. He foresaw the coming of our Saviour. Many of his predictions which seemed improbable at the time have come to pass and others, stretching far out into the future, are receiving progressive fulfillment.

The Sunday Lessons

(First Advent, morning, Malachi 3:1-6 and 4:4-6)

The Sunday lessons commence with a prophecy from Malachi concerning the coming of the Lord's messenger who was to be a preacher of righteousness and the forerunner of our Lord:

> Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, . . .
>
> Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

Four hundred years went by before this prophecy was fulfilled. Then Elijah came but not from heaven as the Jews expected. As the Baptist he came, in the spirit and power of Elijah turning the children of Israel to the Lord their God. John the Baptist is called Elijah because of his rugged appearance, fearless preaching, and ascetic character. He preceded our Lord by a few months and thus became his forerunner.

(First Advent, evening, Isaiah 62)

Just as Christian people look forward to the second coming of Christ so the Jews of old looked forward to the coming of Messiah, so when God says in Isaiah 62 that he will not rest until Judah is redeemed we need not hesitate to apply that redemption to Christ. Isaiah 61 and 63 speak in the name of one person, and that person is Christ. Indeed Jesus applied Isaiah 61 to himself in the synagogue at Capernaum when he stood up for to preach. He read, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me to preach good tidings unto the meek." So we apply Isaiah 63—"Who is this that cometh to Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah? . . . I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save"—to our Lord's passion in holy week.

(Second Advent, morning, Isaiah 52:1-10)

Isaiah 52 is used here as a lesson because of its apparent appropriateness to the coming of the Lord, even the appearance of his herald being a glad and joysome sight:

> How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.

This chapter is part of the great prophecy of the Suffering Servant which is read on Good Friday morning. Some of its words are very familiar, "He was wounded

for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." In the lessons read in Advent God assures his people that as he has delivered them in the past so will he deliver them in the future. His people need not fear Babylon. When Babylon's cup of iniquity is full, Babylon will be destroyed. Then Isaiah goes on to say that as God will deliver his people from Babylon so will he deliver them from a worse fate through the atoning work of the Messiah.

(Second Advent, evening, Amos 3:1-8)

The thought of Christ coming as our judge is often stressed on the Second Sunday in Advent, and this evening's lesson has been selected with that thought in view. Amos declares that God must punish his people for their sins, and more especially so because they are his chosen people. He must punish them so that the surrounding nations will take note and beware, and then he must punish them for their own good. His judgment upon them will direct them into paths of righteousness and make for the advancement of his kingdom. The moral of this lesson is that God cannot be our friend and benefactor unless he chastises us for our sins. This is the same thought which the psalmist expressed when he said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn thy statutes."

(Third Advent, morning, Jeremiah 1:4-10 also 17-19)

The story of Jeremiah's call to be God's prophet is a very appropriate one for the Third Sunday in Advent because of the Ember Days, with their supplications for the clergy, which follow during the week. This lesson records what God said countering all the excuses Jeremiah might have put forward for not accepting the prophetic office. As God elected Jeremiah, ordained him, equipped him, guided him and told him what to say, so this lesson is designed to stimulate interest in and respect for the high office of the Ministry and to make known the seriousness of its calling.

(Third Advent, evening, Nahum 1:3-8, 15)

The lesson from Nahum is designed to show that however delayed God's judgments may be they are nevertheless inevitable. God forebears and exercises mercy but there always comes a time when God must display his infinite power and unfailing righteousness in punishing the wicked. The thought is that God is infinitely kind and merciful even to the undeserving and destroys only as a last resort. Nahum prophesied the downfall of Nineveh and, as the prophet had foretold, Nineveh became an empty place, a void and a waste. God had to destroy it because of its wickedness.

(Fourth Advent, morning, Isaiah 40:1-11)

Seeing that Christmas is so near, an appropriate lesson of cheer is read on the Fourth Sunday in Advent. In it God announces to Judah that her warfare is accomplished and her iniquity pardoned. Because Judah had sinned against the great light given to her, God had to punish her more than he punished the heathen; but now, since God's judgments against her had been fulfilled and her sin pardoned, God was able to give her the full fruits of blessings through the birth of the Messiah. In this lesson the prediction as to the Lord's messenger appears again followed by an inference that the work begun by John the Baptist would progressively go on until its completion in God's good time. The following lines in some measure resemble Christ the good shepherd:

> Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God . . .
>
> He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

(Fourth Advent, evening, Zechariah 2:10)

Perhaps no lesson could have been more appropriately

chosen than the one from Zechariah 2 for the last Sunday evening in Advent. It is a clear call to the people of Zion to rejoice because the Lord their God is coming to dwell among them. Even Gentiles will come to worship him and will become his people. On the very eve of Christmas this lesson from the Old Testament announces Christ will come. No other alternative lesson is appointed and no other is needed. This one is perfect in that it predicts the birth of Christ and the conversion of the Gentile world:

> Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.
>
> And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee.

The Daily Lessons

(The lessons from Joel)

The lessons from Joel are read just before or just after the First Sunday in Advent depending on the number of days there are in any one Advent season. They emphasize the penitential character of Advent and stress the call to fasting and prayer. When taken to heart they help us to readily forego all personal undertakings which would hinder us from taking part in the Church's corporate act of penitence for the sins of the people.

The occasion of Joel's prophecy was a fearful famine caused by locusts and other destructive insects. In this calamity Joel called upon both priests and people to humbly supplicate God in fasting and prayer. Forseeing their impenitence he foretells yet more disastrous calamities and prophesies the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. But all is not lost, the believing shall be saved. He then predicts the destruction of God's enemies in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

The six lessons taken from Joel begin with (1) a call to mourn before the Lord for all his judgments now present upon the earth; (2) a call to fear and tremble because of judgments about to fall upon the earth; (3) a promise from God to return to his people in favor if they will return to him; (4) another call to mourn before God by sanctifying a fast and by calling a solemn assembly; (5) God's promise to bless and to save all who call upon him; (6) an invitation to all people to know God in his judgments.

(The lessons from Isaiah)

During Advent most of the Old Testament lessons are taken from Isaiah, the daily readings going straight through the first thirty chapters. The reason they have been taken from Isaiah is because his book is full of references to the coming of Christ's kingdom. The lessons begin with a call to keep the ecclesiastical year in sincerity. To keep the year in a merely formal and perfunctory way is not enough, spirit must permeate every form, love every act. Professions of love to God must result in deeds of love to man otherwise our observances become a delusion and a sham.

All of the old Hebrew feasts and fasts were God-appointed under the law but God took no pleasure in their observance because of the iniquities of his people. A timely message this at the beginning of a new Church year because, however acceptable to God our Christian festivals may be when observed in spirit and in truth, they must be equally hateful to him when observed in a spirit of practical irreligion and unbelief. Lest our worship should become unacceptable to God, and our prayers have to go unanswered, God says:

> Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Isaiah presents God as being very sweet and very gentle. He presents him as being deeply touched by the sufferings of his people and as being moved with *bowels of compassion* towards them. His language anticipates the incarnation. In tender yearning God humbles himself, stoops down from his throne, lays aside his glory and his power, and speaks in the language of a suitor, and says:

> Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

But the people will not hear. So God asks himself why it is that Jerusalem, once so renowned for piety and righteousness, should have become as unfaithful and as wayward as a harlot. Her calamities are all due to her own sins. Why does she continue to sin when her sins bring down such suffering upon herself?

Under the parable of a vineyard God questions himself as to what he could have done for Israel that he had not done. He had planted a good vineyard but the vines had only brought forth wild grapes. God had done everything possible for the spiritual development of his ancient people but all his labor had been ineffectual, he must therefore leave his people to their own devices:

> I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down.

Because of their unrepentant natures God had to turn his back upon his people, he had to reject them, but all his judgments upon the house of Judah were in mercy and only such as would advance his kingdom.

To Isaiah God's rejection of Judah was revealed

through a spiritual experience which was as potent and as wonderful as that of Paul's experience on the way to Damascus. Isaiah saw God high and lifted up in the temple, sitting on the throne of his glory, and surrounded by thousands of his angels. And from out of that divine glory Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Instantly Isaiah answered, "Here am I, send me." Isaiah was a layman at the time, but upon his willingness to go wherever God would send him he was confirmed in his appointment. Then, after an angel had touched his lips with a live coal from off the altar, he was told to go and tell Judah of God's rejection of her. Henceforth her land should be desolate and her people scattered far and wide over the face of the earth.

One of these lessons from Isaiah tells how God used the distress of his people to re-affirm his promise of a deliverer. Isaiah was commissioned to tell Ahaz, king of Judah, that Judah need not fear the combined kings of Israel and of Syria in battle. As a surety of his promise, God gives Ahaz a sign which only finds its true meaning in Christ:

> Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son; and thou, O virgin, shalt call his name Emmanuel.

Before such a child could reach the age of puberty, Isaiah told Ahaz, you will know that I have spoken truth. But it did not take that length of time, within three years both the kings of Israel and of Syria were killed and their armies scattered. A very beautiful passage immediately following this prophecy is reserved for a lesson on Christmas Day. The words most familiar to us are:

> For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,

> The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 11 is a very beautiful prophecy of a time that is yet to be—a Golden Age—the result of his coming who shall spring forth from the stem of Jesse. In this kingdom justice will prevail everywhere, but it will be God's justice and not man's. Beneficence will extend even to the realm of nature so much so that even the lion will eat straw like the ox. This new day will dawn when all men own Christ king and do him willing service:

> For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Following a prophecy stretching out into an indefinite and yet distant future in which the Jews return to Jerusalem, a joyful thanksgiving is made to God for his great mercies. Judah praises God for his comfort because, although he had rejected her, he has now received her back to himself.

The chapter which tells of the destruction of Babylon is thought by many to symbolize the overthrow of Antichrist, and is read because of its similitude to the great day of the Lord when the lost will shrink from Christ's presence. The future reign of Christ is here pictured as obscuring all earthly grandeur and authority, all the powers of earth acknowledging him Lord of lords and King of kings. In that day we are told *the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed* for the Lord of hosts will reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem.

The lesson in Isaiah 26 seems to foretell what is going to happen at the general resurrection on judgment day. "Thy dead shall live; My dead bodies shall arise . . . the earth shall cast forth the dead. Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut the doors about thee; hide thee for a little moment until the indignation be overpast. For behold the Lord cometh forth out of his place to

punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity . . . In that day the Lord with His sore and great and strong sword shall punish . . . the swift serpent . . . and the crooked serpent: and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." This prediction corresponds with those of the end of the world in the New Testament and is doubtless intended to be understood as such. It is the time of great tribulation.

These daily lessons from Isaiah close with thoughts that are highly reminiscent of thoughts expressed in the last book of the bible. This for instance: "Blessed are they that wait for him, they shall weep no more." This refers to a time not yet arrived and surely synchronizes with that wonderful day foretold by Saint John, "When God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be neither sorrow nor crying."

This passage from Isaiah 30 is also like Saint John:

> The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

This surely refers to that time when Christ shall put all enemies under his feet, the last enemy to be destroyed being death, for death is indeed the stroke of our wound.

CHAPTER NINE

ADVENT LESSONS—NEW TESTAMENT

Scripture lessons are read daily throughout the year at Morning and Evening Prayer. The Old Testament is appointed for the first lessons and the New Testament for the second lessons. The table of lessons, called the lectionary, is to be found in the beginning of the prayer book. The number of lessons appointed for any one season depends upon whether Advent is long or short. As Joel is omitted from the Old Testament in a short Advent, so is 2nd Peter from the New.

The Sunday Lessons

(The four mornings—Saint Luke 1 and 3:1-17)

These lessons are designed to show that heaven itself bore witness to the fulfilment of old testament prophecy at the birth of Jesus. They say, God has kept his promise to our forefathers, prophecy is fulfilled, Messiah has come.

By the mouth of an angel John the Baptist's mission was revealed to his father Zacharias as he ministered in the temple. Some months later the same angel—the archangel Gabriel, announced to the maiden in Nazareth that, by the power of the highest, she should bear a son whose name should be called Jesus, the Son of the Most High. To Joseph, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream, saying, "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." Then Elizabeth, the mother of John, being filled with the Holy Ghost prophesied, saying to Mary, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Whence is this to me that the mother of our Lord should come to me?" And John's father, Zacharias, after God had loosed his tongue for he had been stricken dumb for disbelief, immediately prophesied of his son, "And thou child shalt be called the prophet of the highest: for thou

shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways." And when in due course this prophecy was fulfilled and John became the forerunner, John himself prophesied in these words, "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable."

As to the complete fulfilment of these prophecies, we know that Christ came at Bethlehem, that the baptism with fire and the Holy Ghost was miraculously fulfilled at Pentecost, and we can well believe that the judgment suggested in the words, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather his wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable," will be fulfilled when Christ comes again to judge the world.

(First evening—Matthew 25:1-13)

The evening lessons in Advent are associated somewhat more closely with the recognized thought of each day than are the morning ones, and they are more concerned with our Christian duties than they are with the fulfilment of prophecy. This is clearly seen in the lesson for the first Sunday evening which is the parable of the bridegroom on his way to meet his bride. Ten young women were invited to meet him and to enter the house with him but as the night came on these fell asleep. Then a cry arose at midnight, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh." All the maidens rose up to trim their lamps but five had forgotten to take oil in their vessels to supply their lamps, so they said to the others, "Give us of your oil for our lamps are going out." But these had none to spare and so directed them to go and buy for themselves. In their absence the bridegroom came; those that were ready went in to the feast and the door was shut. Then came the five foolish maidens, knocking and saying,

"Lord, Lord, open to us." But the cold answer was, "Verily, I know you not."

Here the thought is readiness for Christ's return. This earthly story has a heavenly meaning. Oil is an emblem of grace. To have oil in their vessels means to have grace within the heart. Grace cannot be borrowed and in the last day, if you and I are shut out of heaven, it will be because there is no grace within our hearts.

(Second evening—1 Thessalonians 2:1-13)

The lesson for the Second Sunday in Advent is associated with thoughts concerning the scriptures. Saint Paul reminds his converts with what sincerity and earnestness and purity of motive he, together with Silas and Timothy, had come among them preaching and teaching the truth of God's holy Word as it had been found in Jesus Christ. It is as though Paul says, We are indeed most thankful to God and daily adore his holy name, because when he sent us among you we found your hearts open to receive the gospel not as though it were a human philosophy but as a revelation from God himself. The moral here being that when we read the Word of God we should read it, not as something man has devised out of his own mind and experience, but as a revelation from heaven.

(Third evening—I Corinthians 9:7-23)

This lesson for the Third Sunday in Advent must have been chosen with an eye to the Ember Days which follow it, so admirably does it fit in with Ember Week thoughts. We are praying for the clergy. The collect even puts a prayer into our mouths for them while the epistle tells us what the clergy are—ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God; the gospel, on the other hand, tells us what kind of men they should be—faithful unto death and forerunners of our Lord's coming again. During this week our bishops are engaged in the task of making choice of fit persons to serve in the sacred ministry. And in this lesson we are taught how they should live. They should live by the gospel, devoting their whole time to

the ministry. As Saint Paul says, "Those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel." This the clergy should do whether their income is large or small.

(Fourth evening—Matthew 1:18)

This lesson for the last Sunday evening in Advent was chosen because of its near approach to Christmas Day. The reading is not really the story of Christmas but has to do with the circumstances surrounding our Lord's birth. It commences, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise." It tells how Mary was found with child, what Joseph did about it, and of the dream God gave him. This lesson directly links up Jesus with the sign God gave to Ahaz 400 years before and says that Jesus was born in fulfilment of this prophecy: "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

The Daily Lessons

(Saint Mark—chapters 1 to 5)

In these lessons from Saint Mark's Gospel we begin to trace over again the earthly life of our Lord. This we do year after year as each Advent season comes along. Guided by the lectionary we follow the footsteps of Jesus from the time he was born in Bethlehem to the day when he ascended into heaven from Mount Olivet. This yearly following of our Lord's life is both useful and practical and is indeed inspiring when pursued with patience.

Saint Mark is the briefest and the earliest of the Gospels. Mark is really the interpreter of Saint Peter who witnessed the events recorded in this gospel. Perhaps no other literature exists in which so much graphic and minute detail is compressed in so few pages. Every sentence depicts some incident. The book presents Jesus as a mighty worker of miracles, as the mighty wonder-working Son of God. The gospel was written from Rome and intended for Gentile readers, this we know because all Jewish customs are explained.

The range of these lessons from Saint Mark is from the appearance of John the Baptist to the raising from the dead of Jairus' daughter. The record is really that of the first year of our Lord's ministry and shows Jesus as supreme over the bodies and minds and souls of men. He casts out devils, straightens the crippled limb, forgives sins. He is shown as supreme over nature in the stilling of the storm on the lake. He is shown as the Lord of life in the raising of the dead. Perhaps it should be mentioned here that none of these lessons mentions our Lord's second coming but only presents our Lord in that role mentioned by Isaiah—a great teacher and healer and a raiser from the dead—the very role Jesus told John's disciples he was performing when John from his prison cell asked Jesus if he were really the Christ.

(The Second Epistle of Saint Peter)

Unlike the lessons from Saint Mark the lessons from Second Peter are all about our Lord's second coming. In deadly earnestness the writer, who writes that he has but a short time to live, assures his readers that our Lord's coming is a fact and not a fable cunningly devised. The transfiguration upon the mount pledges that coming, the voice from heaven confirms it, the ancient scriptures seal it. The writer also says judgment is sure. This, he says, is assured by the fact that God has always punished evil. God cast down the rebellious angels from heaven, he destroyed the world by water, and he destroyed both Sodom and Gomorrah, and he will not fail to punish evil now.

The writer's object in this epistle is to remind his readers of all that the prophets and the apostles have said. He also warns his readers that men will tire of waiting for the end of the world and will question whether the Lord will ever come. He says men will overlook the fact that God created the earth and once destroyed it, and that he has reserved both the heavens and the earth for destruction by fire. He points out that time is nothing to God and that a thousand years to him are but as the passing watch in the night to us.

The moral behind all these lessons is that we should adjust our lives towards truer holiness, remembering as we ought all that Christ has done for us. We should live more nobly, striving for perfection, ever on guard lest we be enticed by the world or caught napping by those who would lead us astray. For a Christian to have once known Christ and then to backslide is misery for himself and a dishonor to Christ. We are therefore urged to pursue that holiness of life which becomes our Christian calling, so that we can look forward to the Lord's coming with hope and joy. Since God has provided all things possible for our spiritual development, holiness of life is possible providing we rely more and more on Christ and strive to be more obedient to his holy will.

(The Revelation of Saint John the Divine.)

All through Advent the weekday lessons at evensong are from the Revelation of Saint John the Divine. These foretell God's purposes. They are a divine disclosure. John says his book is the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass. And immediately John goes on to say, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

These lessons show Jesus in all his celestial beauty, as King of kings and Lord of lords. All power is given unto him. Here are revealed those final steps which lead to the final triumph of good over evil. Some chapters are omitted from the daily readings because their meaning is not clear, other chapters just as difficult to understand are nevertheless read because they are ennobling and inspiring. Probably all these chapters were perfectly clear in John's day and generation. Even though we may not be able to rationalize them all now, we still feel all their truth.

In these lessons we have incomparable beauty. The glory is not of this world. It is heavenly glory. God sits

upon his throne; there is a rainbow round about the throne; angels and men do God reverence; there is the ascended Christ like unto the Ancient of Days; the book of things to come the seals of which none but Christ could open; there are the four horsemen of the apocalypse; here is the worship and adoration of the lamb that was slain; the great multitude of the redeemed; the resurrection scene and the river of life. In the presence of all this beauty of scene and language, we sense the truth of John's words when he says the veil between earth and heaven was lifted and he saw heaven opened.

These lessons are of great spiritual value and need to be pondered over time and time again. For instance, in our Lord's message to the seven churches Saint John saw the ascended Christ walking among them, encouraging the faithful and rebuking the unfaithful. With one exception all of these churches had left themselves open to rebuke. One had left its first love; another, though it had a *Name to live* was dead; a third was consumed with worldliness; heresy and false teaching afflicted most of them. The value of these lessons depends largely upon how we take them home to ourselves. There is no satisfaction in knowing that our Lord had cause to rebuke some early Church, the only possible satisfaction we can ever have is in knowing that we were once at fault ourselves and, having been shown our fault, corrected it.

A help towards the understanding of Saint John's book is in remembering that it really depicts the conflict between good and evil. John wrote especially for his own time but his principles apply to all ages. There are those who think that Christ's messages to the seven churches foretell in prophetic form the history of the Church on earth to the end of time. The first six messages relating to the period from the founding of the Church to the coming of Christ for his saints, while the seventh has to do with those Christians who were found not ready to meet the Lord at his coming and therefore not worthy to behold the visible union of Christ and his Church.

In Saint John's day the Church was being fearfully persecuted and his words were intended to be words of encouragement. He writes to say that Christians must stand fast in the day of trial, that they must be loyal to Christ. His words of cheer reflect our Lord's own words of comfort. "These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer I have overcome the world."

These lessons for evensong are most suitable for Advent. The thoughts expressed in them run parallel with those of the Advent season. They affirm that Christ is supreme and will be king for ever, that he will overthrow sin and Satan, that God's righteousness will triumph in the long run, that sinners will be punished and the righteous rewarded, and that those whose robes have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb will dwell forever in God's kingdom. These are all Advent thoughts. Saint John's opening words are, "The Lord is at hand." John's closing words are words from our Lord, "Surely I come quickly." Even so come, Lord Jesus.

CHAPTER TEN

THE ADVENT PSALMS

The Psalms were to the old Jewish temple what hymns are to the Christian Church. They were the recognized and accepted religious songs of the people. The people knew them by heart and found in them the embodiment of all their hopes and fears, their joys and aspirations. The psalms came quite naturally into the early Christian Church. There were no hymns at first and the psalms were received as part of God's revealed word. Jewish converts sang them just as they had always done, except that as Christians they sang them as looking back to Jesus. Messiah had come. We follow in the footsteps of those early converts. We sing the psalms in the light of Christ, as looking back to him, and we make sure they apply to him by singing a gloria ascribing equal glory to Christ with the other members of the Blessed Trinity.

A special selection of these psalms has been appointed for Advent, those selected being considered more suitable for that season than others. Some allude to the scripture lessons. Others coincide with Advent's penitential nature by crying aloud for deliverance and by uttering longings for God's reign in Zion. All through these psalms the thought of the coming of the Lord predominates. He is coming as deliverer, coming as the Saviour of Judah, coming as the righteous judge, coming as Israel's king. In all this coming we sense something of the depths of Israel's hopes and expectations for the reign of God among his people.

(1st Advent, morning, psalms 8 and 50)

Advent Sunday tells of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem and of his cleansing of the temple. After the cleansing the blind and the lame came to Jesus in the temple for healing, and when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things Jesus did and heard the people crying

in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David" they were sore displeased and said unto him, "Hearest thou not what these say?" and Jesus answering said, "Yea, and have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." Here we have a direct quotation in the Advent gospel taken from this 8th psalm, which accounts for its place among the Advent psalms.

This psalm goes on to ask, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" When applied to Jesus, the words—that thou visitest—suggest the coming of our Lord at his incarnation.

Psalm 50 has been chosen as suitable for Advent because it contains words—Our God shall come and shall not keep silence—which sum up the thought and spirit of Advent.

> Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.
>
> He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.
>
> Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

This fiftieth psalm also refers to the lesson from Isaiah in which God declares that he despises all offerings and all sacrifices that are made simply as ritualistic acts. The thought is reiterated that only those offerings are acceptable to God which are offered in sincerity and truth.

(1st Advent, evening, psalms 96 and 97)

Psalm 96 also suggests our Lord's entry into Jerusalem amid acclamations of "Thy King cometh." After an ascription of glory the psalmist bids his readers to tell it out among the heathen that the Lord is king. It is from

this psalm that the Venite in the American prayer book gets its ending.

> For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; and with righteousness to judge the world, and the peoples with his truth.

Here it should be noted that the thoughts in the psalms go back to older bible truths. Thus, in psalms 105 and 106, the psalmist sings of God's dealings with his people Israel, of his wonders in the land of Egypt and of his lovingkindness in the wilderness, how he drove out the heathen before them and gave them Canaan for their inheritance. But while there is nothing very original in psalm thoughts, those thoughts do reflect and carry forward earlier predictions of a coming Messiah and they do enhance the thoughts of the prophets through sheer beauty of language.

Psalm 97 does this very thing. It is like a mirror reflecting predictions of things to come. Some of these things have been only partly fulfilled as yet. Our Lord said, 'I am the light of the world,' and in view of that claim we think of him when we read, "There is sprung up a light for the righteous." Remembering his holy life we recall him when we sing, "Give thanks for a remembrance of his holiness." But if the words—There shall go before him a consuming fire to burn up his enemies on every side—mean anything at all they surely refer to the destruction of the world by fire in the last day.

(2nd Advent, morning, psalms 80 and 82)

One of the Advent lessons has to do with God's rejection of Israel, this psalm is a lamentation because of that rejection. In Isaiah's prophecy of destruction, he testified that God had done everything possible for Israel's spiritual development but all to no purpose. He had planted a good vineyard but it had brought forth only wild grapes, so there was nothing left to do but for God

to destroy it. The psalm was written after the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy and alludes to it. Jerusalem is destroyed and Judah carried away into captivity. Here the psalmist asks himself the reason for God's punishment of his ancient people:

> Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it
>
> Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land . . .
>
> Why hast thou then broken down her hedge, so that all they which pass by pluck off her grapes?

Like so many of the psalms this one becomes a perfect prayer. The psalmist's song becomes a prayer for his country's forgiveness and for Judah's return to God's favor.

> Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven and behold, and visit this vine . . .
>
> Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

Psalm 82 possibly refers to the same judgment of God on Israel. Since his people would not repent and mend their ways God had to turn his face away from them and leave them to their own devices. Since they would not save the outcast and the oppressed, God had to turn them over to the oppressor and let them become outcasts in the sight of all men. Judah is still an outcast. She found no place for repentance, and her reinstatement awaits our Lord's return.

(2nd Advent, evening, psalms 25 and 26)

Psalms 25 and 26 are pleas for mercy and for deliverance and are well adapted to the thought of judgment to

come. The psalmist pleads with God to be merciful and to forgive his sins. These psalms set forth the penitential character of Advent. They set forth the grievousness of the writer's sin together with an expression of his misery and desolation.

> Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.

The thought of judgment to come enters into these psalms, too. In the face of all David's efforts to do good one enemy after another rose up to afflict him. David affirms that he is willing to trust himself to God's judgment knowing that he will judge righteously, only he wants God to deliver him from the habitations of those who do evil—or as the revised version puts it—he petitions God not to gather his soul with sinners. This is the very cry every Christian makes when he thinks of judgment to come. "Thou most worthy judge eternal, suffer us not for any pains of death, to fall from thee."—Gather not my soul with sinners.

(3rd Advent, morning, psalms 52 and 53)

Psalm 52 was written when David's life was in danger. Saul sought opportunity to slay David but David assured of God's protection cried out in confidence, "Why boasteth thou thyself, O tyrant, that thou canst do mischief? God shall destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee and pluck thee out of thy dwelling, and root thee out of the land of the living." The reason for Saul's destruction was because of his wickedness. Here the absolute certainty of judgment is recognized. David, referring to Saul, said, "Lo, this is the man that took not God for his strength, him will God surely punish."

Psalm 53 insists that there is no righteousness apart from God. Once God is left out of man's reckoning degeneration sets in and man becomes vile and corrupt and abominable. The psalm begins by saying, "The fool

hath said in his heart there is no God," but the psalmist is not referring to the mentally afflicted but to those who will not learn either from their own experience or from the experience of others that disbelief in God drags down all life into the gutter, depriving it of all inspiration and goodness and beauty.

(3rd Advent, evening, psalms 93 and 94)

The thought in psalm 93 follows that of psalm 52 with the tyrant boasting, but the psalmist declares that no matter how much the tyrant roars he is still circumscribed by God. As he himself says, "The waves roar, and roar horribly, but the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier."

Psalm 94 gives vent to that longing within every godfearing man for the day when God will come and put an end to all wickedness on the earth. The plaintive cry is, "How long, O Lord, how long shall the ungodly triumph? They do all manner of evil, they boast, they speak disdainfully. Arise thou judge of the world, and reward the proud after their deservings." And a verse from this psalm expresses not only this longing for God's judgment but also an assurance that this judgment is bound to come:

> Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

Verse six of psalm 94—they murder the widow and the stranger and put the fatherless to death—is almost an exact quotation from one of the Advent lessons in Jeremiah. Jeremiah had said, "Execute ye righteousness and judgment, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless nor the widow . . . if ye disobey, I swear by myself, saith the Lord, that this house shall

become a desolation." But in spite of all this warning the people did wickedly, and in the midst of their wickedness they said, "Tush, God will not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." But the psalmist was confident that judgment would come upon them and that swiftly. All this tallies with the assertion in the lesson from 2nd Peter that if God failed not to cast down Lucifer and his angels from heaven, and failed not to destroy the earth by water, and failed not to avenge the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah, neither will he fail to punish man's wickedness now when the cup of iniquity overflows. And so the psalm goes on to say, "Take heed, ye unwise among the people: O ye fools, when will ye understand? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? Or he that made the eye, shall he not see?"

(4th Advent, morning, psalm 98 and 99)

In psalm 98 the psalmist spins the thoughts of Isaiah into a song of a redeemed world. God had miraculously delivered Judah when all men thought he had forgotten her:

> God hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

It is hard to believe the psalmist wrote this psalm before the birth of Christ, so perfectly does it enshrine the hopes of all Christian people. Here is the hope and the joy, the confidence and the expectation of a child of God as he looks forward to his Lord's return:

> Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.
>
> Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the

> earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

Certainly those who witnessed our Lord's ascension into heaven and who heard the angels promise a coming again must have felt this psalm fitted their case.

Psalm 99 tells why God must come as judge. He must come in judgment because judgment is predicated in the thought of holiness. God cannot be holy and overlook the fact of sin. A holy God is a forgiving God, but the forgiven one must justly be punished for his sins. "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their doings."

Holiness is the theme in this psalm too. Within it we have the Tersanctus over again. The words are, "Holy is he . . . holy is he . . . our God is holy." The psalmist finds this holiness in God's dealings with his people, all of God's dealings with Israel having been based in righteousness and in truth. God did not allow his people to escape the penalties of their wrongdoing even though he loved them.

(4th Advent, evening, psalms 101 and 103)

David wrote psalm 101 just as he was beginning his reign as king. The song declares his intention to rule in righteousness. He will not be guilty of wickedness himself nor will he tolerate any wickedness in his home. He promises that only the godly will find office under him, and that he will clear all vice and immorality from the streets, and that he will drive all evil doers from the land. It is true that David failed badly in his intention even though he made a better king than did Saul, but when we sing this psalm we envision the coming of the perfect kingdom in which nothing will enter that defileth or maketh a lie.

Perhaps no more suitable psalm could ever have been chosen for the Fourth Sunday in Advent than the 103rd. It is a song intended to evoke gratitude, thanksgiving,

praise, and adoration. The Sunday anticipates Christ's birth:

> Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.
> Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

The psalmist enumerates the long record of the things we so often forget, the long record of sins forgiven, of grace restored, of prayers answered, of comfortings and sustainings, of merciful guidances and deliverances. Then he compares the day of a man with the everlasting mercy of God:

> The days of man are but as grass, but the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.

And yet the psalmist knew not half of the everlastingness of God's mercy for its magnitude was not revealed until Christ came heralded by angels as a child in Bethlehem. The psalmist invoked the angels to bless the Lord, they did so in song on Christmas Eve.

> Bless the Lord, ye angels of his, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

(Alternative psalms 7, 9, 36, 57)

The alternative psalms for Advent run parallel in thought to that of the proper psalms except that the judgment reserved for the ungodly is more clearly defined.

Psalm 36 affirms that the ungodly flatter themselves in their own eyes until their abominations are found out and that then they are cast down and cannot stand. Psalms 7 and 9 state the reason for this. God executes the

judgment, trapping the ungodly in the work of their own hands, catching them in the pits they themselves devised, netting their feet in the same nets which they secretly made for others. Psalm 7 is even more explicit. It says:

> God is angry with the wicked every day. If a man will not turn . . . God hath prepared for him the instrument of death . . .
>
> Behold, the ungodly travaileth with iniquity; and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.
>
> He hath graven and digged up a pit, and is fallen himself into the destruction that he made for others.
>
> For his travail shall come upon his own head, and his wickedness shall fall on his own pate.

The psalmist read this truth as he scanned the facts of history. We can read it too in the bible. Pharoah commanded the drowning of all Hebrew baby boys, but God turned that fate against Pharoah when his armies perished in the Red Sea. King Nebuchanezzar planned the death of Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego but those who threw them into the furnace were consumed by its flames. Darius threw Daniel into the lion's den but the lions only devoured those who plotted against his life. Haman erected the gallows for the hanging of Mordecai but God caused Haman to be hanged upon it himself. And within our own day and generation we have seen the ungodly trapped by their own devises. Germany, Italy, and Japan all conspired to bomb the world into submission but were bombed into submission themselves. It was so when our Lord was crucified. Judas betrayed our Lord to be hanged upon a cross but Judas' vile act recoiled upon himself and he too was hanged upon a tree.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE ADVENT HYMNS

Our Advent hymns are scripture thoughts woven into song. It is easy to trace these thoughts with a bible and a concordance. For instance, *Hark, the voice eternal* can be traced back through both testaments, the composer advancing step by step from the story of creation and man's disobedience up through the prophets and the psalms to the birth at Bethlehem. This hymn closes in a paean of praise with the earth and the sea giving up their dead, and with the heavenly host kneeling before the Lamb, thoughts certainly characteristic of the last book in the bible. Thus to the hymn-writer may belong all the honor of his verse but to God belongs all the originality of the thought.

God's Thoughts

The first line of *Come, Thou long expected Jesus* admirably strikes the Advent chord, the word Advent meaning coming. Every verse of this hymn can be traced back to scripture, the thoughts being the same even though the words are different. It is so with all our hymns, like the psalms of old they are bible truths set to music.

Hosanna to the Living Lord used to be the first hymn on our Advent list but now, in the new hymnal, it is to be found among the additional hymns marked for the First Sunday in Advent. This hymn matches and re-echoes the hosannas of the Gospel for the First Sunday. It is a glad shout of praise to Christ as creator, saviour, king. Verse four runs parallel in thought to that of our Lord's cleansing of the temple.

> But, chiefest, in our cleansed breast,
> Eternal bid thy Spirit rest;
> And make our secret soul to be
> A temple pure and worthy thee.

The hymn—*Lord, her watch is keeping*—is an echo of 2nd Peter which reads, "For in the latter days men shall say, Where is the promise of his coming? For from the time our forefathers fell asleep all things continue as they have been since the creation of the world." The hymn asks the very same question and then proceeds to answer it:

> When shall end the night of weeping?
> When shall break the promised day?

The answer given is the same one as is given in Saint Matthew's Gospel which declares that the end cannot come until Christ has been preached throughout all the world.

As the following lines indicate almost exactly the same question is asked in *Thy kingdom come, O God*:

> When comes the promised time
> That war shall be no more,
> Oppression, lust, and crime
> Shall flee thy face before?

And in this hymn the answer is inferred in the words, "O'er heathen lands afar thick darkness broodeth yet." This answer is in line with scripture which says that the end of the world cannot come until the number of God's elect has been computed.

Thy kingdom come, on bended knee the passing ages pray is indebted for its thoughts to Isaiah, to the Psalms, and to Revelations. The hymn asserts that signs of our Lord's return are already visible upon the horizon. This thought leads the author to urge more faithful devotion to Christian work and more loyal preaching of Christ's return.

A verse in Isaiah 21 commences, "Watchman, what of the night?" It was this verse which inspired the hymn *Watchman, tell us of the night.* This hymn is cast into the form of a dialogue between a watchman upon the city's wall and a traveller passing by. The watchman symbolizes Israel awaiting the Messiah. The traveller represents the

prophets who every now and again pass by on Israel's scene. The watchman wants to know when Messiah will come and the traveller answers that everything now portends to an immediate coming:

Watchman—tell us of the night,
  What its signs of promise are.
Traveller—o'er yon mountain's height,
  See that glory beaming star.
Watchman—does its beauteous ray
  Aught of joy or hope foretell?
Traveller—yes; it brings the day,
  Promised day of Israel.

The Lamp's Light

O Word of God incarnate is a good hymn and may be sung at any time but it is particularly fitting for the Second Sunday in Advent when the thought of the day turns to God's word. It is a song of praise because the light of the scriptures shines on from age to age. The Church is the custodian of God's word and the hymn likens the Church to a lamp out of which shines the light of the sacred page. One verse prays that the lamp, which is the Church, will continue to let the true light shine brightly:

O make thy Church, dear Saviour,
  A lamp of purest gold,
To bear before the nations
  Thy true light as of old.

The Church from her dear Master
  Received the gift divine,
And still that light she lifteth
  O'er all the earth to shine.

In *Lamp of our feet* the author alludes to God's word by a series of descriptive titles and then portrays the virtues of God's word in terms of those titles. Some of these titles are very beautiful—for example, "Brook by the

traveller's way"; "Bread of our souls"; "Our anchor and our stay." The last verse is really a prayer asking God to grant that we may read the scriptures aright and that we may turn to them for guidance.

In *Lord thy word abideth*, the writer is not concerned with what we call God's word but is concerned with what we do with it. Those who take it to heart can alone expect to be nourished by it. As the writer puts it, Only those who believe in it can ever get joy and light out of it. It means consolation, direction, guidance, and inspiration to the earnest seeker, supporting the living and consoling the dying. This closing thought—that through the light of God's word we may safely pass through the waves of this troublesome world—marks the ending of several of these Advent hymns.

Rejoice, rejoice believers is based largely upon our Lord's parable of the ten virgins, five of whom were wise and five foolish. This hymn keeps close to our Lord's parable until in the third verse it sings of the marriage supper of the Lamb. It prays that we may see the earth's redemption and forever be with Christ.

Wake, awake, for time is flying takes its theme from the same parable but it is more deeply spiritual and has more breadth of vision. This hymn was written in the sixteenth century and has survived the passage of time simply because it merits survival. It is one of the Church's treasures and will be sung when many of the popular hymns of today will have been forgotten. The third verse depicts the rapture of the redeemed at the marriage supper of the Lamb:

> Lamb of God, the heavens adore thee,
> And men and angels sing before thee,
> With harp and cymbal's clearest tone.
> By the pearly gates in wonder
> We stand, and swell the voice of thunder,
> That echoes round thy dazzling throne.
> No ear hath ever caught,
> Such bliss and joy:

We raise the song, we swell the throng,
To praise thee ages all along.

The Prophet's Message

God spoke by the prophets. God told the world that redemption would come through Christ. He said Christ would come preceded by his messenger. The coming of this messenger caused Charles Coffin to write the hymn, *On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry announces that the Lord is nigh.* He intended the hymn to glorify Christ whose coming into the world set his people free. The hymn-thought reechos Saint Paul's reasoning when he says, "Seeing these things are so what manner of persons ought we to be in all virtuous and godly living." Only the author uses this thought to say that as John prepared the way for our Lord's first coming so ought we to prepare for his second coming by purifying all our desires.

Another echo of the Baptist's cry is *Hark, the glad sound, the saviour comes.* This hymn goes back to the bible and enumerates in verse the proofs of Christ's messiahship that were sent to John the Baptist in prison. Verse four is typical of the other verses telling what Christ came to do:

He comes, the broken heart to bind,
The bleeding soul to cure:
And with the treasures of his grace
To enrich the humble poor.

Thou art coming, O my Saviour! suggests the sprightly joy every Christian feels when he reflects upon what the coming of Christ will mean to him; justification and acceptance by Christ, a new and transformed body, a reunion with loved ones, a life eternal with powers undreamed of, a body free from sin in the paradise of God. All these blessings will be his when Christ comes again:

O the joy to see thee reigning,
Thee, our own beloved Lord!
Every tongue thy name confessing,
Worship, honor, glory, blessing.

This hymn affirms that the Holy Communion is a pledge of our coming bliss and it follows Saint Paul in the thought that every time we kneel at the altar we witness to Christ's coming again. Another verse enlarges on the thought that although the time of our Lord's coming is hidden from our eyes still we can with patience wait.

Hark, a thrilling voice is sounding goes back to the cry that rose at midnight announcing the bridegroom's coming. The hymn urges those who walk in the light of the Lord to cast away all works of darkness. It exhorts all men everywhere to seek the Lord now in the time of this mortal life so that when he comes we shall be able to welcome him with joy.

Our Lord's Promise

Our Lord promised to return to earth on clouds of heaven. It was this promise that gave birth to the hymn *Lo, he comes with clouds descending!* Here is a picture of Christ's return. Our Lord appears with his saints. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth. Those who are Christ's are justified, those who are not his must suffer for their sins. The second verse is almost a literal translation of Rev. 1:7: "And every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." The hymn ends on a note of high exaltation that he who once hung upon the cross now reigns supreme in heaven and in earth.

In Matthew 24 our Lord tells of his coming with great glory and that he will send his angels to gather his elect from the four corners of the earth. This chapter is the inspiration for the hymn *Great God, what do I see and hear.* Judgment day has come. The dead in Christ arise. The living are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The saved only experience joy at the Lord's return, but as for the ungodly these are filled with guilty fears and are all unprepared to meet him.

After telling the story of the importunate widow and drawing from it the moral that men ought to pray and

not to faint, our Lord went on to suggest that there would not be much faith left on the earth at his second coming. This thought together with those which predict evil times ahead led the composer of *The world is very evil, the times are waxing late* to appeal to all good Christians to be real watchmen unto the Lord. After describing the glories of the promised land he cries:

> Strive, man, to win that glory;
> Toil, man, to gain that light;
> Send hope before to grasp it,
> Till hope be lost in sight.

The hymn ends with a beautiful petition or prayer, 'Jesus, in mercy bring us to that dear land of rest.'

Brief life is here our portion is a series of comparisons between life here and life hereafter, all of which are drawn in favor of the life to come. Its words are full of hope and longing and confidence for tearless, sinless paradise. The hymn has been influenced by Saint Paul's assurance, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" and by Saint John's vision of the future, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him." The hymn closes with the lines that are so dear to hymn lovers:

> O sweet and blessed country,
> The home of God's elect!
> O sweet and blessed country
> That eager hearts expect.

In Matthew 25 our Lord draws a very vivid picture of his coming again to judge the world. All the nations are gathered before him and he separates the good from the bad. To the good he says, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." To the bad he says, "Depart

from me, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels." This judgment scene inspired the hymn *Day of wrath, O day of mourning.* Judgment day has come at last. The veil is drawn aside and every man stands revealed for what he is but those who are Christ's are able to plead his merits and to claim his promise. Two well known lines from this hymn are those which are used at every requiem:

> Man for judgment must prepare him
> Spare, O God, in mercy spare him.

Zion's Song

Thy King cometh is Zion's song. The old testament is full of this song, chapter after chapter taking up its refrain. Zion looked for the coming of the Messiah just as expectantly as we look for his coming again. Zion expected him to sit and reign upon the throne of David for ever, we express a similar thought when we say "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Zion's song motivated the hymn *The king shall come when morning dawns,* a hymn which tries to catch some of the glory of that morning when Christ shall come again:

> Not as of old a little child
> To bear and fight and die,
> But crowned with glory like the sun
> That lights the morning sky.

This hymn expresses all the longing of God's saints for the coming of that day when truth will be vindicated and right triumph over wrong. The last verse with its "Come quickly, King of kings," is very reminiscent of those last few words in the Revelation of Saint John the Divine, "Even so come, Lord Jesus." We long for that day because the brightness of that morning will exceed the glory of the first Easter morn.

A very appropriate and beautiful hymn for the last Sunday in Advent, even right up to the last minute of

Christmas Eve is *O Come, O Come Emmanuel.* This is Zion's song over again but expressed in the language of Isaiah. It is Zion's song of welcome to him whom we now know as the Christ Child but whom the hymn refers to as Emmanuel, Rod of Jesse, Dayspring, Key of David, Lord of Might, all ancient titles given to the Messiah. The hymn alludes to Israel's captivity, God's promise to deliver, the scene at Sinai when Moses ascended the mountain, and to Israel's wanderings in the wilderness. It is a pleasing thought to believe that both Jew and Gentile could sing this hymn together:

O Come, O come, Emmanuel
  And ransom Captive Israel;
That mourns in lonely exile here.

CHAPTER TWELVE

ADVENT IN THE CREEDS

We affirm what we believe in the Creeds. These have been the accepted statements of the Christian faith for centuries. Of the three creeds in use in the Anglican Communion—the Apostles, the Nicene, the Saint Athanasius—only one, the Nicene, was ever officially adopted as a statement of faith by a general Church Council of all Christendom.

The affirmations concerning our Lord's coming in these three creeds are for the most part duplications of one another and are not at variance. They set forth the clear revelations of scripture and summarize our Lord's teaching. Their statements do not sum up all that the bible tells about that coming and are not intended to comprise all that we should know or all that we should believe concerning it, but they do have the limited objective of keeping before our minds the essential truths of that coming and of making sure that our eyes are fixed only heavenward, whence cometh our help.

As in the case of the Advent collect, so here in the creeds, two comings are placed in juxtaposition. First we recite, *I believe . . . in one Lord Jesus Christ . . . who . . . came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man;* and then we go on to say that *he shall come again.* So all through Advent we look for that coming again; but, should his coming as our visible King be delayed, we are ever ready to welcome him on Christmas Day as he who came to visit us in great humility.

His Coming Again

It is only when we study the creeds that we find out how much they teach concerning our Lord's coming again. This is what we believe in the creeds:

> Apostles': From thence he shall
> come to judge the quick and the dead.

> . . . The resurrection of the body: and the life everlasting.
>
> Nicene: And he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. . . . And I look for the resurrection of the dead: and the life of the world to come.
>
> Athanasius: From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men must rise again with their bodies: and shall give account for their own deeds. And they that have done good will go into life eternal: they that have done evil into eternal fire.

These three statements are really identical in meaning, the last sentence beng a direct quotation from Matthew 25:46. Combining the statements together, the creeds teach us to believe that our Lord will return from heaven with glory to judge every man according to his works. We believe in the resurrection of the body and the everlasting life of the world to come and that our Lord's kingdom will have no end.

Meanings

From thence he shall come. *From thence* means from heaven whither our Lord ascended on the first Ascension Day. The term *ascended* describes the way Jesus withdrew from this earthly scene. In the minds of the disciples heaven was situated immediately above the earth. Doubtless they believed the earth flat and heaven a place up in the skies, but we now know the earth is round and that up and down are relative terms, so when we say that as he ascended so will he descend again we should remember that we are using figurative language. We may go down to the centre of the earth in theory but on passing that point we would ascend again towards the sky.

We should understand, therefore, that the words *from thence* are used to comprehend the thought that as Jesus left the world so will he in like manner return.

From thence! From thence means coming from the heaven where he was at first with God. In view of other statements in the creed we may read into this a reference to his co-existence with the Father, a reference to the fact that he who once was in the likeness of man first existed in the form of God. *From thence!* Not from within ourselves but *from thence* our Lord will come. Here is a real truth. Figuratively speaking, heaven is outside of self, altogether outside of self, and whenever and wherever we get outside of self we ascend towards heaven. Hell is in self. The more a man becomes wrapt up within himself the deeper he descends into hell. Jesus will come from that heavenly region where no thoughts of self exist.

He shall come. The pronoun *he* emphasizes the fact that it will be the very same Jesus who will return and not some stranger. The same thought is expressed elsewhere in the creed when we say, I believe in *one* Lord Jesus Christ. It is unthinkable to have two, one at his birth and an altogether different one on Judgment Day. He who will come in the clouds of heaven will have the same gentle, loving, gracious personality the disciples knew and wrote about. The use of the pronoun *he* insists upon the persistence of Christ's personality beyond the grave. This agrees with the angels' promise: "This *same* Jesus shall return." We crystalize our belief in the creed when we say, "*He* shall come," that is, the Lord Jesus Christ himself and not some seraphic stranger.

He shall come *again.* That little word *again* reminds us of the time when he first came as a little child, born of the Virgin Mary. This same Jesus who came once before at Bethlehem is coming again, not as a child but as our wondrous Saviour; coming with eyes alight to bid us wondrous welcome; coming with outstretched nail-pierced hands to bid us dwell with him. But he will come again *with glory.* The thought which lies hidden behind these two little words *with glory* is truly revealing. The

thought is that Christ will come in all the glory of God. To come *with glory* means coming manifesting the presence of God. He will come in all the glory of God, crowned with honor and renown, as King of kings and Lord of lords.

It has been suggested that perhaps the clouds into which our Lord vanished on Ascension Day were clouds upon clouds of angels but unrecognized as such by the sorrowing disciples. The suggestion here is that their eyes were "holden" and the glory of heaven which they thought they saw with their eyes they really perceived in their souls.

To judge both the quick and the dead. So many people seem to think that the moment they die they will get their reward, going straight to heaven or to hell with judgment somehow residing within themselves. But no such thought is justified either in the bible or in the creed. In both judgment is an event in time and the judge is Christ.

There are those who question the possibility of a just judgment upon millions of souls on judgment day. Time, they say, would not permit it. But surely these have the image of an earthly court too vividly pictured before their minds. When Christ comes he will come manifesting the presence and power of God, and under such spiritual conditions it is possible for all human souls to receive a just judgment in a moment of time. Those who stand in the likeness of Christ will manifest that likeness and rise to meet Christ while those who have it not will shrink away in much the same way as water finds its own level.

The resurrection of the *body*. Both the bible and the creeds teach the resurrection of the dead body. There cannot be any such thing as the resurrection of the soul or spirit. Our souls never taste death and therefore never need a resurrection. Only the dead body needs a resurrection. When the Lord comes again the dead in Christ shall rise and the living shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. In a moment their bodies will be changed

and transformed and were it not so all the living would have to die before they could meet the Lord.

The words, *I look for* the resurrection of the dead, have a much stronger meaning than that of mere expectation. They mean that we are really hoping and expecting to see soul and body meet again. Through the resurrection of the body, the identity of personality is guaranteed as well as its spiritual continuance. Without that there is no heaven.

In insisting upon the resurrection of the dead *body* we should understand that the creed attempts to lay hold of a divine mystery and does not try to compass it. This article of faith means precisely that which Paul meant and took pains to teach, that Christ rose from the dead not as a disembodied spirit but with a transformed body.

And the *life everlasting.* In this world existence is carried along by a series of births and deaths. A life begins and in a few years is cut off, another life taking its place. Under the limitations of earth, the thought of never dying is intolerable. Millions of human beings live out life's little day only in the hope of a better life to come. But life will be different in heaven because heaven will be a different kind of a world. Births will cease; deaths will cease; pain and grief will be no more. When Christ comes again immortal youth will crown each brow, earth's limitations having been removed.

And the life of *the world to come.* As impossible and as miraculous as such a world now appears to be, we still look for it. We believe it will come and we watch for its dawning. As Saint Peter says, "We according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." And in three short words Saint Peter sums up the reason why such a world is possible. It is because the righteousness of God will dwell there, sin and Satan molesting no more.

Whose kingdom shall have no end. The words *whose kingdom* defines the kind of kingdom which is to be eternal, and differenciates it from Satan's kingdom or the kingdoms of this world. The kind of kingdom which is to have no end

is that for which Christ came and died to establish, a kingdom established in righteousness, godlikeness being its all pervading character. And this godlike kingdom is truly Christ's kingdom, but that does not mean that somehow our Lord will displace in importance the other members of the holy Trinity. No member of the holy Trinity ever has had or ever will have precedence over another. The kingdom which shall have no end is God's kingdom —the Father's kingdom, the Son's kingdom, the Holy Ghost's kingdom, not that there are three kingdoms. There is only one kingdom and that is God's.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ADVENT IN THE BIBLE

The first reference to a coming Saviour is given in the book of Genesis when Adam fell. God at once promised to redeem the fall. A deliverer should come forth from Adam's seed who should bruise the serpent's head. The Old Testament reveals facts concerning that coming, 1500 verses in all. Its central theme is a suffering yet conquering Messiah. The facts are revealed progressively, in stages. He should be born of a virgin, of David's line, in Bethlehem, a light to his people; he should be cut off and yet should sit on David's throne and reign for ever.

Isaiah tells that a son is to be born upon whose shoulders the responsibility of government will rest, but this is the astounding thing—"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." Jeremiah is equally revealing, "Behold, the days come saith the Lord, that I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch, and He shall reign as King. . . ." Micah even tells his birthplace. "But thou, Bethlehem, . . . out of thee shall he come forth that is to be ruler in Israel; whose going forth have been of old, from everlasting."

The history of Israel is a history of looking forward to the coming of this king. All Israel waited for his coming. From first to last the promise of his coming was Judah's hope and stay. As for his kingdom, its beauty and majesty, its glory and power are all revealed in Israel's scriptures, the amazing revelation here being that its perfection is due primarily to the fact that it is founded in righteousness. "They shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest."

To Judah our Lord's coming was all of a piece. Nothing is said specifically in the Old Testament that Messiah's coming would comprise two advents. So while the

Jews of old must have often been sorely perplexed at the apparently contradictory statements concerning the coming one—his coming as a suffering Lamb, and his coming as a ruling Lion—still they never dreamed of him coming twice, as a child in Bethlehem and as a judge on judgment day. This double event was hidden from their eyes.

The Jews of old looked for Messiah with much more unanimity and with much livelier faith than we look for him, but when he came they were not prepared for his great humility. He was unlike anything they expected. They expected him in Jerusalem, he came in Bethlehem. They looked for him among the best known families of the land but he came born of a peasant woman. They imagined he would fight their enemies, but he went up and down the country with twelve common fishermen, talking about a kingdom not of this world.

For thirty-three years Jesus remained among his people but for the most part they would have none of him. Despised and rejected, accounted a blasphemer and an imposter, accused of associating with publicans and sinners, he died upon a cross as a common felon. Until after his resurrection, even his disciples were not wholly sure of his true identity. To the last they half expected an earthly kingdom. John's question, "Art thou he that should come or do we look for another?, suggests the uncertainty that ever hovered in their minds.

In his crucifixion our Lord fulfilled prophecy after prophecy, prophecies relating to Messiah's sufferings which could never have been answered had Jesus died a natural death. Many passages of scripture which must have been dark and meaningless before instantly became bright with wonderful meaning. Those allusions to sufferings, for instance, in psalm 22, only find fulfilment through the cross. And how perfectly the wrath of man fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel in 9:26. "And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself."

But the grave did not hold Jesus. He rose from the dead and came again and again to his disciples. They

recognized him. They became fearless in their faith. They all suffered persecution, some even death, in upholding the truth of his resurrection before men. For forty days the risen Christ remained among his disciples instructing them in matters relating to his kingdom, then in their company he ascended Mount Olivet, and after promising to return, ascended into heaven.

In the New Testament, with its record of the coming of the Lord Jesus and of all those details connected with his life and death, we have a partial fulfilment of what the Old Testament prophets foretold. In its promise of a second coming it not only clarifies much that must have been very confusing to the Jew of old but also pledges the fulfillment of all the prophets have foretold. Next to announcing that the Lord has come, the important message of the New Testament is *He shall come again in glory.* The importance of this message may be seen in the fact that some 300 verses tell about it.

The Bible Picture

The bible picture of our Lord's coming again is full of dramatic detail. How much of this detail is figurative no one knows. Without doubt some of it is but unless it is obviously so we should not take it for granted, lest we be found playing fast and loose with scripture when it suits our purpose.

The first resurrection.

In speaking of his coming again our Lord clearly states that there will be more than one part to that which we usually call the resurrection of the dead. In response to a question put by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God should come, Jesus answered:

> I tell you in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other left.
>
> Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

> Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Those that are taken correspond to the five wise maidens in our Lord's parable of the Ten Virgins, and those that are left to the five foolish maidens who were unprepared to meet the bridegroom when he came. Thus those *in Christ* ascend to meet the Lord as he returns to earth.

Saint Paul in Thessalonians 4:15 tells us that he had a special revelation about this separation in that day. This is what he tells:

> For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:
>
> Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

In this passage Saint Paul reveals that the unchristian dead will not rise from the dead at the same time as will those who have died in Christ. Thus when our Lord comes neither the unchristian living nor the unsaved dead will have any part in this first resurrection.

The rapture of the saints.

Those who are Christ's will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This meeting together of Christ and his Bride the Church is referred to in the bible as the Marriage of the Lamb. Then will take place that which is symbolically called the Marriage Supper—joy and rejoicing in the Lord. How long this will last we do not know, scripture does not say. Scripture is equally silent as to whether it will be seen from the earth. Little is said too as to what confusion and perplexity will be caused on the earth when all God's saints are withdrawn, we only know that there will be distress upon the earth.

The time of tribulation.

The bible pictures a time of great tribulation upon the earth when God's people are withdrawn from it. Antichrist will appear; that is some man of sin opposed to Christ, a very incarnation of the devil who will organize and collect together all the forces of evil to make war upon whatever remains of Christian good upon the earth. In this tribulation many who were unprepared to meet the returning Lord in the clouds of heaven will repent them of their unpreparedness and will suffer persecution and even death for Jesus' sake. Even though these were not accounted worthy of the blessedness of beholding the visible union of Christ with his Church, still their bodies will not linger in the grave with the unchristian dead but will ascend up into heaven and will be numbered with the saints who will accompany our Lord as he journeys earthwards. Revelation 20 tells about these:

> And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.
>
> But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Armageddon

When the union of Christ and his Church has taken place then shall the Lord Jesus Christ with his saints appear descending from the skies in the sight of all men. This is the coming that our Lord spoke about when he said that he would come in power and great glory to put an end to the great tribulation upon the earth: Matthew 24:29. Then shall every eye behold him and all people mourn for him. Then shall all the armies gathered to-

gether before Jerusalem be destroyed. This is the day concerning which the Prophet Zechariah was told to declare:

> Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, ... For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken . . . Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations . . . And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives.

Through our Lord's intervention Judah shall be saved and her enemies destroyed. At Armageddon the wrath of heaven will be poured down upon the earth and Christ himself will slay Antichrist the lawless one, with the breath of his mouth.

Conversion of the Jews.

The bible says that when Christ comes again the Jews will welcome him as their Messiah. They look for his coming now and when he comes again they will welcome him as their deliverer. Then, as Isaiah says, a nation shall be born in a day. "In that day the fulness of the Gentiles shall be accomplished and all Israel shall be saved. Romans 11:25.

The bible says, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." These words refer not to the men who crucified Christ but to the nation responsible for the deed. The effect of that gaze will not be one of fear and dread as in the case of the Gentiles but one of instant conversion, for the Jew will see in the coming Christ the promised Messiah. His unbelief will vanish. Every Jew will turn to him and will acknowledge him as his redeemer. Then shall the Jews say:

> Lo, this is our God: We have waited for him and he will save us: this is the Lord.
>
> We have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

The Millennium

Unless we mistake imagery for reality, the coming of our Lord will bring a period of unparalleled peace and prosperity to the earth. After Armageddon Satan will be bound:

> And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.
>
> And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.
>
> And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years be fulfilled.

It is from this term "a thousand years" which occurs six times in Revelations that we get our word *Millennium* and which we usually associate with a time of unparalleled happiness and prosperity. Millenarians believe that Christ will reign during this time with his saints on earth. With Satan bound all ungodliness for the most part will cease. Some regard this time as that golden age prophesied by Isaiah when nothing will hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain; as the day referred to by Micah when swords will be beaten into ploughshares and nations cease to learn war; as the day our Lord had in mind when he said, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

The second resurrection.

Our Lord's earthly kingdom is pictured in Revelations 20: as coming to a close with the casting down of Satan into the lake of fire and brimstone:

> And when the thousand years are expired, Satan will be loosed out of his prison,
> And shall go out to deceive the nations. . . .
> And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.

Why that earthly kingdom will last a thousand years we are not told except inferentially by Saint Paul. Paul says Christ must reign until he has put all rule and authority and all enemies under his feet, the last enemy to be destroyed being death.

Then will come the second resurrection. All the dead will arise from their graves and they, together with the living, will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged for their deeds in the flesh. Saint John's vision of this event is very simple but very dramatic: "Whatsoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

All bible allusions to this day speak with the same sure tone. Thus in Daniel 12:2:

> And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Thus the door is shut forevermore, and we are either shut in or shut out. This finality is particularly true of our Lord's own parables.. Nothing is more striking than the surprise of the lost in the parable of the last judgment. They cannot realize they are not Christ's friends. So the foolish virgins cry with full expectation of being admitted, "Lord, Lord, open to us."

The End of the World:

After the judgment, Saint John tells us that all things will be made new, that there will be new heavens and a new earth. As for the things that once were, he says:

> And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away; and there was found no place for them.

But Saint Peter completes the picture and he tells us what will become of them. He tells us:

> The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Thus in the destruction of the earth time will cease to be and eternity will be ushered in.

The destruction of the earth might seem at first sight to conflict with the thought expressed in those last three words of the Gloria Patri—*world without end.* But there is no conflict really. The Gloria refers to the world of God's being, not to the earth upon which we live. The words in the Gloria mean that the glory of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is eternally the same. Saint Paul proclaims the same truth but phrases it differently when we read in that wonderful chapter in Corinthians:

> And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

Here Paul's thought is reaching out to those endless ages in the paradise of God when this earth with all its sins and sorrows will have long since passed away. He is thinking of that time when we shall be like Christ, transformed into his image, of that time when sin will no longer have any dominion over us, of that time when the

despairing cry of a sinner to Christ as Saviour will be heard no more, and Saint Paul asks himself, What will the glory of Christ be then? Saint Paul answers it by saying, It will be the same as it has ever been. Here on earth, God as our Saviour looms large in our minds and the glory of Christ fills our hearts, so much so that we often forget the glory of the Father and the glory of the Holy Ghost. But on that farther shore we shall know God as he is and we shall recognize in him all the glory we have seen in the Son as our Saviour, all the glory we should have seen in the Father as Creator, and all the glory we should have experienced through the Holy Ghost as our sanctifier. God will be our God just the same as he has always been. He will be our God, and we shall see him not as a stranger but as someone whom we have always known and loved, and his glory will be that which we have envisioned for evermore.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SAINT ANDREW THE APOSTLE

Saint Andrew stands first in the Church's calendar of Christian saints and his festival is linked up with Advent. The prayer book rule is that Advent Sunday comes nearest to Saint Andrew's Day, either before or after. Another apostle, Saint Thomas, is listed for commemoration for December 21, which is within the Advent season. The American Missal also includes other commemorations. All these holy days are like sparks among the stubble. They give life and light, color and fire, to the Christian Year, their passing figures adding beauty and form to the scene. They tell us what the saints did while awaiting the coming of the Lord.

Andrew the Saint

In the Collect for Saint Andrew's Day we pray that we may obey Christ's call just as Andrew obeyed it. He followed Christ without delay. He heard Christ say, Come, follow me, and instantly he followed Jesus, and saw where he dwelt and abode with him that day. Then he went and found his own brother, Simon Peter, and brought him to Jesus.

This is a wonderful example to imitate. It is what every Christian should do. As Keble says in his Christian Year:

First seek thy Saviour out and dwell
Beneath the shadow of His roof,
Till thou have scanned His features well,
And known Him for the Christ by proof.

Then, potent with the spell of heaven,
Go, and thine erring brother gain;
Entice him home to be forgiven,
Till he, too, see his Saviour plain.

Saint Philip followed the example. He called his friend. "Jesus findeth Philip and saith unto him, follow me. And Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathaniel said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see." The Woman of Samaria followed the example too. She took her friends and her townsfolk to Jesus.

From Christ's presence Saint Andrew went forth with willing and eager feet to tell his brother that he had found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. This we must do. This does not mean that we must necessarily leave our work and go into the Ministry but it does mean that we must take Christ with us into our work wherever we are. Whether we stay at home or go abroad Saint Andrew's love for souls must characterize our own.

Like Saint Andrew we should start by taking Christ into our own homes first. Unless we start by taking Christ there we shall not make much of a success of taking him abroad. We can begin by being truly Christlike at home, by showing in our lives love and faithfulness, by surrendering ourselves to all that is good and true, by doing our tasks sweetly and gladly. So will we prepare others to see the Lord.

Saint Andrew took the Gospel far afield, he travelled far into Eastern Europe. Here again we should follow his example. We should be Christlike first at home and then abroad. No true lover of Christ is content to let his Christian influence remain at home, he wants it to go far out beyond the confines of the home, far out into the outer world. Christ wants it to go to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Saint Andrew grew in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Saint Andrew represents those who take time to be holy, who never have to experience any violent emotion or disturbing and frightening religious experience. That is why he is such a good saint to

follow. We can understand him. We can understand his holiness because it is within our reach. He, like ourselves, boasts of no ecstasies, no special illuminations, no catchings up into the third heaven; he had no visions, no revelations from the Lord; he lived unsupported by any extraordinary event and yet he grew in grace, having only a calm and teachable heart that ripened and developed into singular loveliness under the discipline and doctrine of Christ.

Like our Lord, who set his face as a flint to go up to Jerusalem, Saint Andrew went forward to preach the Gospel without as much as one backward look. He had a work to do and he did it. He needed no goading overseer. He set out to tell the world about Christ and he did it without faltering. We Christians need more of Saint Andrew's stalwartness. We need more of his love for Christ, more of his zeal for the Church, more of his yearning for souls. We need more of all these things if we are to endure to the end and if we are to accept with fortitude whatever cross Christ sees fit to lay upon us.

Andrew the Apostle

Saint Andrew was of Bethsaida in Galilee and a fisherman by trade. His father's name was Jona or John, and he was the brother—some think the younger brother—of Simon Peter. He was one of those who listened to John the Baptist by the River Jordan in the hope of hearing more about the coming of Messiah. This fact tells us that he was in earnest about his religion even before our Lord called him.

The bible tells us very little that is peculiarly characteristic of Saint Andrew. Whenever he is referred to he is mentioned in connection with somebody else, and whatever he does is always done in connection with somebody else, consequently we cannot say anything about him that does not in a measure apply to somebody else.

The Latin Fathers named Andrew the Introducer, because he took his own brother to Jesus and because he introduced others to Jesus also. The Greeks named

him the Protoclete—the first called. These are titles of honor. It is true the bible mentions Andrew's name first, but another disciple was with him when he followed Jesus to his home. John the Baptist had said concerning Jesus, 'Behold the Lamb of God,' and one of the two disciples which heard John speak was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, and straightway he followed him.

After Saint Andrew's first meeting with Christ, almost a year elapsed before our Lord called him to leave his boats and nets and follow him. Jesus was walking by the sea of Galilee and saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net for they were fishers. "And Jesus saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

It was Saint Andrew who took the boy with the five barley loaves and two small fishes to Jesus. He took him somewhat apologetically, saying, But what use is this small amount of food for so many people? And yet even this was an act of faith. He must have thought Jesus could use it. The other disciples did nothing. Phillip's verdict was that two hundred pennyworth of bread would not be enough to feed so large a multitude.

It was Saint Andrew who took the Greeks to Jesus. The Greeks had gone up to Jerusalem to worship at the feast. They wanted to see Jesus and approached Philip—the disciple with the Greek name—saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Instead of taking them to Jesus, Philip spoke to Andrew and together they took them to Jesus.

As we read through the gospels it is obvious that Saint Andrew belonged to the inner circle of Jesus' friends. His name is frequently mentioned after that of Peter and James and John. He was among the few disciples whom Jesus took with him into retirement up the Mount of Olives. There he heard Jesus tell of the latter days. Saint Mark records this incident. As Jesus sat among his disciples facing the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately when all the things he had been mentioning should come to pass. Then Andrew heard Jesus recount the number of things

which must happen before the end should come.

The last specific reference in the bible to Andrew is in the Acts of the Apostles where his name is recorded fourth among those who met together to choose a successor to Judas who by his betrayal of our Lord fell from his apostleship. At this gathering Andrew cast his lot and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered among the apostles.

Andrew the Martyr

After our Lord's ascension into heaven, Andrew set out on a missionary journey and is said to have done very fine work in establishing the Church in those countries bordering on the Caspian Sea. Russians believe that he made converts around Moscow; Poles, that he preached around Lwow; Greeks, that he was martyred in the City of Patras, in ancient Greece. Tradition claims that he travelled down from Sarmatia into the Grecian Peninsula preaching as he went against the idols the people worshipped. The governor, a man named Aegeus, threatened Andrew with dire punishment if he did not cease, but Andrew persisted in his preaching and converted the governor's wife. She made a public profession of her faith which so enraged her husband that he ordered Andrew scourged and crucified like the man he preached about.

Saint Andrew did not shrink in the least from crucifixion but rather esteemed it a death to be desired, an honor which his brother alone of all the disciples shared with him. According to an early writer the sight of his cross did not faze Andrew in the least. He showed no signs of fear or nervousness, nor even the least suspicion of anxiety, only of elation at the thought that he had been accounted worthy to die as his master had died before him. As he was about to be crucified, he cried: "Hail precious Cross, that hast been consecrated by the Body of my Lord, and adorned with His limbs as with rich jewels. I come to thee exulting and glad, receive me with joy into thy arms. Oh, good Cross, that hast re-

ceived beauty from our Lord's limbs! I have ardently loved thee; long have I desired and sought thee, now thou art found by me, and are made ready for my longing soul; receive me into thy arms, taking me from among men, and present me to my Master, that He who redeemed me on thee may receive me by thee."

Opinions differ as to the form of the cross on which Andrew died but the one called by his name, with the ends fixed transversely in the ground like the letter X, is generally believed to have been like that on which he died. He suffered a lingering and painful death, this being the intention of his crucifiers who fastened him on the cross with cords instead of nails to delay the moment of death. For two days Andrew hung upon his cross speaking to them that stood by and exhorting them to look unto Jesus and be saved. Saint Andrew expired on the 30th of November which day is universally set aside for the commemoration of his name. Long years afterwards his bones are said to have been taken to Scotland and reinterred at Saint Andrews. Old pictures of Saint Andrew portray him with hair and beard silvery white leaning on his cross with the Gospel in his hand.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE

We commemorate two apostles during Advent, Saint Andrew and Saint Thomas. The Bible does not say much about either of them but from the little that is said we can gather much. From the moment Saint Andrew became one of our Lord's disciples he became active in our Lord's work. He did things. He must have been a companionable sort of man, this we gather from the fact that he did things in company with others. Saint Thomas may have done things too but no mention is made of it. Thomas was doubtless affectionate and self-sacrificing but he was inclined to be solitary, things troubled him, he brooded over his thoughts, and he wanted to know rather than to believe.

These two apostles may well be said to represent Christians generally. Some of whom look forward to our Lord's coming with hope, and love, and joy; others are not so hopeful and confident, and they doubt whether some bible references should be taken literally. They cannot see how Jesus can come again. These latter we call honest doubters. We call them honest because their doubts lie more in their heads than in their hearts. They love the Lord, try to imitate his life, but they doubt first this and then that.

An Honest Doubter

Saint Thomas is popularly regarded as a doubter, but this is true in only a very restricted sense. His questionings were honest. His scepticisms did not spring from a heart that did not want to believe. He wanted to believe but could not. The world, on the other hand, does not want to believe, therefore it chooses to doubt.

It is love within the heart that makes all the difference between an honest doubter and a dishonest one. The world's doubt is never honest because it springs from

lack of love within the heart. Thomas' doubts were nothing like the world's doubts. The world keeps away from Church but not Thomas. Thomas loved the Lord, chose his company, lived with him, gave up everything to follow him, and was ready to die for him.

The Collect for Saint Thomas' Day affirms that God suffered Thomas to be doubtful for the greater confirmation of the faith. The thought being that God passively consented to Thomas' doubt to elicit from him such a statement of belief as would enrich the church. Once before our Lord turned Thomas' questionings into blessings. Our Lord was telling of the mansions in the sky he was going to prepare, when Thomas interrupted him with the words, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest and how can we know the way? Our Lord's reply has been the comfort of millions of hearts—"I am the way, the truth, and the life." And when Thomas denied belief in the resurrection, asserting that he would not believe unless he touched our Lord's wounds, Christ suddenly appeared, and from the lips of this so-called doubter came words which were the most explicit of Christ's Godhead thus far spoken by any apostle. He said, "My Lord and my God." To Thomas' demand for proof our Lord responded with overwhelming evidence, "Reach hither thy finger . . . reach hither thy hand . . . be not faithless but believing," but Thomas did not need the evidence. Recognition was sufficient. Then it was that our Lord spoke words which have comforted all the ages, and which sum up the moral of the whole narrative: "Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

Even though our Lord mercifully turned Thomas' doubt into belief and thus brought good out of evil, we should not glory in Thomas' unbelief. His unbelief was a dishonor to Christ. In line with this thought the collect teaches us to pray that we may so perfectly and without any doubt believe, that our faith in God's sight may never be reproved. The reason why Thomas could not accept the disciples' testimony concerning the resurrection was

because the crucifixion had bitten so deeply into his soul. Everything had ended so disastrously. The shock of Christ's death had stunned his sensibilities and he needed more time to reason its meaning out. Yet for all this Thomas was to blame, otherwise our Lord would not have reproved him. Christ had said that he would rise again from the dead but Thomas had forgotten our Lord's words. He also neglected to seek the fellowship of the little band and so was absent when Christ appeared to them.

A Loyal Disciple

The bible pictures Saint Thomas as a loyal disciple. He was a twin, and is supposed to have been born at Antioch. Thomas means twin. This is what Saint John called him—Didymus, a twin. Tradition says the other twin was Lydia, presumably the one mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as being a seller of purple in the city of Thyatira, who received Paul and Silas into her house after their release from prison in that place. Thomas is thought to have been brought to Christ through the preaching of John the Baptist. He was a simple fisherman. This we know because he returned temporarily to the sea after the crucifixion. Among the apostles he is numbered seventh.

The first bible reference to Saint Thomas is in John 11:16. Lazarus was very sick and his sisters sent word to Jesus informing him of their brother's sickness, and Jesus told his disciples that he would go to see him. And the disciples said, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?" But Jesus would not be dissuaded, thereupon Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." By this we know Thomas was no cautious disciple, choosing the easy road, the safe path, but a bold and impetuous man.

The next time we meet Thomas is on the night of the Last Supper, in John 14. Jesus had just foretold his death and was comforting his sorrowing disciples with his promised return. He told them not to be unduly dis-

turbed in their anxious hearts but to trust in him for he was going to his father's house to prepare a place for them. "And whither I go ye know and the way ye know." Then it was that Thomas interrupted his discourse with the remark: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest and how can we know the way?"

Thomas again comes to the fore in John 20 when the disciples proclaimed the resurrection. His immediate response was, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." This refusal to believe earned for Thomas the doubtful title of doubting Thomas, a title which time has not lived down.

One week later Thomas met with the other disciples as they gathered together privately behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. Suddenly Jesus stood in their midst, and said, "Peace be unto you." Then it was that in all humility, love, and awe, Thomas cried out in affirmation and faith, *Lord and God.* Only a week, but in that week Thomas had descended into an agonizing experience of doubt, only to ascend again to higher heights of faith than before.

On two other occasions Thomas is mentioned in scripture. First at the Sea of Tiberias when seven of the apostles including Thomas went back to their old work of plying for fish. St. Peter had said, I go a fishing, and the other six answered, And we go with thee. All that night they toiled long and hard but caught nothing, but in the morning Jesus called to them from the shore and told them to cast their nets on the other side of the ship and they did so but they were not able to pull them overboard because of the number of fish they had caught The second occasion was when all the apostles gathered together to elect a successor to Judas who by his transgression fell from his apostleship.

An Untiring Missionary

Little is really known of the subsequent history of Saint Thomas, after Pentecost he vanishes from the pages of

history, but he is generally believed to have become an active and untiring missionary. Persia and India claim him. From very early times he has been called the Apostle of India. This is still his title in the Eastern Church. The Christians of Saint Thomas, a very ancient community of Christians existing in the southern extremity of India, claim him as their founder. The existence of this church can be traced back to the fifth and sixth century and so may well have been founded by Thomas. According to tradition Thomas met the three Magi and baptized them, and is said to have suffered martyrdom in India in the year 73. An inscription is reputed to have been found at Miliapore to the effect that Thomas erected a cross in that city and that he himself was pierced with a lance at the foot of it. His bones are now thought to rest in Goa where they were taken in 1523.

In sacred art Thomas is pictured as in deep thought with a lance in one hand and a book in the other, the lance representing his weapon of martyrdom and the book the Gospel he lived by. Occasionally Thomas is pictured holding a builder's rule which is supposed to symbolize his intention to measure all evidence before accepting it.

A legend to the effect that Christ once appeared to Thomas may account for the builder's rule. Our Lord asked Thomas to build a palace for an Indian prince. Thomas gave all the building money away to the sick and poor, and was in due course condemned to death. The prince's brother suddenly died but before he was buried he sat up and told the prince that Thomas was God's servant. He said, "Behold, I have been in paradise, and the angels showed to me a wondrous palace of gold and silver, and precious stones; and they said, This is the palace that Thomas the architect hath built for thy brother." Then the prince went immediately to the prison to free Thomas, and to him the apostle said, "Knowest thou not that those who would possess heavenly things, have little care for the things of this earth? There are in heaven rich palaces without number which were pre-

pared from the beginning of the world for those who purchase their possesssions through faith and charity. Thy riches, O prince, may prepare the way for thee to such a palace but they cannot follow thee thither."

* * * *

The Epistle for Saint Thomas the Apostle is from Hebrew 10 and 11, and is very fittingly chosen seeing that we commemorate him during Advent. It commences, "Cast not therefore away your confidence which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." This epistle tells us not to doubt, not to cast away our confidence. There is good wisdom here for doubts are dangerous things, dangerous to ourselves and dangerous to others. Many good men, in cultivating doubts at the expense of their beliefs, have paralyzed all their energies for Christ. This is the lesson here. We should not doubt lest our neighbors remember our doubts and forget our beliefs. Thomas was a good and faithful man, but the world cares only to remember him as a doubting Thomas.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

ADVENT'S ADDITIONAL COMMEMORATIONS

The Book of Common Prayer provides for the commemoration of many more saints than are listed in its Calendar. A special collect and epistle and gospel is reserved for their use on page 258. A blank space in the collect is left free for the insertion of any saint's name. Thus the name today may be Saint Sebastian and tomorrow Saint Vincent.

The American Missal, which comprises the liturgy from the Book of Common Prayer together with introits, graduals, and other devotions proper to the same, contains a calendar of saints and holy days which the compilers considered suitable for commemoration in our Church. This calendar was drawn up by combining the calendars of the American and English prayer books together with those in use in our own religious houses.

The object in commemorating all these saints is to set before us pre-eminently holy lives for our imitation, in the hope that we shall live our lives as they lived theirs in complete obedience to God. Their lives were triumphs of faith in Jesus Christ. Some mention of them should be made to get a complete picture of the Church's thought. For commemoration during Advent the Missal lists one holy event, that of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and six saints.

Dec. 3, Saint Francis Xavier, 1506-1552.
A great missionary.

Saint Francis Xavier was a native of northern Spain. In the early part of 1540 he led a band of missionaries into the East Indies. Thence he went to Japan where he labored two years. He died of a fever trying to reach China.

This saint regretted having to die a natural death as he considered martyrdom a great honor but before he

died he confessed that his choice of a martyr's death was sinful since God willed it otherwise.

Francis Xavier gave up much and suffered much yet he always spoke of happiness. He died on the Island of Sancian, a cross still marks the spot. His body was taken to Goa where a magnificent Church was built in his honor. As a recognition for his work he is called the Apostle to the Indies.

Dec. 4, Saint Clement of Alexandria, 150-220.
A great Christian teacher.

Saint Clement of Alexandria was a great Christian teacher and philosopher whose great contribution to the primitive Church was that he not only defended Christianity philosophically against all comers, but also helped to show the pagan world in which he lived that the religion of Christ alone satisfied all the questionings of the human mind.

Clement is called the founder of Greek theology. He directed the Catechetical School of Alexandria which was the Christian counterpart of the pagan schools of learning throughout Greece. But perhaps Clement is best known because of his outstanding efforts to curb the ardor of the faithful when the accusation *Christian* meant death. Some of his writings have come down to us and they show him to have had a calm and philosophic mind. In his book, the Stromateis, he deals with the question of how Christians should act in time of persecution. In his day some Christians wanted martyrdom and were courting it, and Clement shows that such action was wrong and contrary to the known will of Christ. In urging all his readers not to take unnecessary risks he quotes our Lord's words in defence of his argument, "When they persecute you in this city flee unto the next." This Clement himself did when he was in danger, not because he was afraid but because he wanted to obey Christ.

Dec. 5, Saint Sabas, 439-532.
A great Abbot.

Saint Sabas was the founder of the religious order of

the Sabaites and was an uncompromising opponent of heretical teaching. Sabas began his monastic career when he was but eight years old. At eighteen he became a hermit and lived until he was twenty-three in a cavern among the gorges of the Kedron as a disciple of the Abbot Euthymius. For twenty more years he lived in several monasteries, then he went back to the spot where he had originally lived as a hermit and founded his own laura, the Laura Mar Saba, in which the monks lived separately, gathering together with one another only on Saturdays and Sundays for food and worship. At 48 the Patriarch Salustius made him Abbot-General of all the monasteries in Southern Palestine. As general abbot he was not popular and soon the monks' objections to him grew vocal. For peace sake he withdrew from among them and built for himself a hermitage in the Wilderness of Thecoe, a wild uncultivated tract of land lying east of the town of Tekoa whither the Maccabees had fled many years before when they were being pursued by their enemies.

We do well to pay honor to men of the stamp of Sabas for the world is only too ready to forget that the foundations of all the great Churches were laid by missionary monks. Time and time again when the world appeared to be lapsing into chaos and heathenism have monks set out from their monasteries to save the day for Christ. In sacred art Sabas is sometimes pictured with an apple which he would never eat because it symbolized to him the fruit which brought death into the world.

Dec. 6, Saint Nicholas, -326.
A great benefactor.

Saint Nicholas is more popularly known as Santa Claus. He was venerated in the East in the sixth century. A Church was dedicated in Constantinople to his memory in 560. The Greeks reverence him next to the great Fathers. All Europe held feasts in his honor on the sixth of December, but these have now for the most part become mixed up with the Christmas festivities.

Beyond that Saint Nicholas was a generous bishop little is really known about him but what is lacking as historical fact tradition amply supplies. He is supposed to have been born of wealthy parents and with this wealth is said to have been most generous to those in need, leaving his gifts anonymously. He himself lived very modestly and in great humility. Miracles were attributed to him while he lived and many more credited to him after he died.

His election as bishop is supposed to have come about in this way. When the old bishop of Myra died a revelation was vouchsafed to the clergy to the effect that the first man to enter the Church the next morning would be the man God had chosen as his successor. Nicholas entered first, and thus was elected by the clergy to the episcopate.

Dec. 7, Saint Ambrose, 340-397.
A great spiritual ruler and organizer.

Saint Ambrose was not educated for the Christian Ministry but for the civil administration of Rome. After completing his education he was appointed Governor of Northern Italy which took him into residence at Milan. Shortly after arriving there he was elected bishop—the old bishop having died—an honor which in all modesty Ambrose refused to accept at first.

The election of Ambrose came about through a dispute which had arisen between the orthodox and the unorthodox clergy as to a successor to the old bishop. Through his eloquence and through his prestige as governor, Ambrose quieted them. In the hush that followed the dispute a childlike voice was heard to say, "Ambrose shall be our bishop." This cry was quickly taken up by the populace and Ambrose became first choice.

After his consecration to the episcopate, Ambrose gave away his property and devoted himself to the task of preparing himself for his great work. He had no fear of man. He insisted upon and obtained from the emperor—upon the threat of withholding communion—penance for

his sins. Many miraculous things are said of his life, and at his death Christ is said to have visited him. Ambrose has been called one of the three great founders of Latin theology. He is reknowned for having built up respect for ecclesiastical authority.

Dec. 8, Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
A great wonder of redemption.

The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is one of the great wonders of redemption. Our Lord had no human father, but this does not mean that he just happened to be born as though for once the first step in procreation was overlooked. Our Lord came into being through the creative energy of God and not by chance. God gave to the Virgin Mary the power to bear the child Jesus, and he whom she bore was God in heaven before he became incarnate on earth.

This commemoration comes very fittingly just before Christmas when the world rejoices in the wonder of his birth. The great wonder really is that God should become man and not that a Virgin should bear a child. The virgin birth is only a detail in the greater wonder, and yet a necessary detail to ensure a truly human birth free from the taint of sin.

Dec. 13, Saint Lucy, ?-300.
A great example.

In Saint Lucy we have a great example of Christian steadfastness. Lucy had made a vow that she would never marry but would live a life of perpetual chastity for Christ's sake. Her parents, unbeknown to her, betrothed her to a man who was not a Christian. On being informed of this, Saint Lucy pleaded with her mother not to force her into a marriage which would be most hateful to her. The mother, seeing her grief and listening to her pleadings, consented to her refusal to marry.

The young man to whom she was betrothed, upon being informed that Lucy would not marry him, accused her to the civil governor of being a Christian, an offence

punishable by death. Upon her arrest the governor, whose name was Pascasius, ordered her to sacrifice to the gods or suffer the defilement of her body. She would not sacrifice to the gods, and no pleas or entreaties could move her from her Christian faith. On being removed to the vile place, she told Pascasius that though he could control her body he could not make her sin in her soul because he could not control her mind. This made Pascasius so angry that a servant to please him murdered her by stabbing her in the throat with his dagger. St Thomas

What God Wants

God wants us to be saints. He wants us to be saints more than anything else in the world. Saintliness may not be what we want but it is what God wants. This is the will of God even our sanctification. We know this from God's word and we know it from the lives of his saints.

It is not easy to become saints. It never has been and never will be. It is not easy to abandon thoughts of self for thoughts of others. It is not easy to forego all plans for our own pleasure, power, and prosperity. It is not easy to live every day as though it were our last and yet it is foolish not to try for this world and all that it holds dear so soon passes away.

We cannot be saints unless we love God every day. The history of every sinner upon the street is simply the history of one who has ceased to love God, first today then tomorrow until he has ceased to love God at all. We may think it useless trying to be saints but if we do we are wrong because when we cease trying to be very good we so easily become very bad.

The Church has made many saints. Church history is full of them. All down the ages the Church of God has worked and prayed for this one end—to persuade men to obey Christ. Where it has succeeded it has raised up to itself great monuments of faith, where it has failed it has brought down upon itself much suffering and sorrow.

The Church still makes saints, now here now there. It makes them as it works and prays and labors, carrying God's word and God's sacraments to the people. And tomorrow's saints will come from people like ourselves. They will not be essentially different from ourselves in any one particular except in their more complete consecration of themselves to God.

God wants us to be saints, not under some new and special condition but under the very conditions in which we live. That first, all else second. By God's grace our prayers, labors, devotions, beliefs, should produce in us holy character. That is what God intends. Then he can use us. Then he can make us lights in our several generations.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE ADVENT EXHORTATIONS

A rubric in the prayer book directs that on the First Sunday in Advent, and at certain other times too, the Exhortation shall be read. This is a reading beginning 'Dearly Beloved,' followed by earnest words of advice and warning to those who neglect their communions. The Exhortation is found in the Holy Communion service on page 85 immediately following the Sursum Corda—Lift up your hearts. There are three exhortations there, the second and third being alternative readings for the first. From these readings we may learn something of our Christian duty, all three having to do with our obligations as communicants.

The Announcement

In the Exhortation the priest announces that he is going to celebrate the Holy Communion. This is not for anybody and everybody but only for those whose hearts go out in thoughts of love and obedience to God. What the priest sets out to do, he declares he sets out to do through God's help. "I purpose through God's assistance to administer to all such as shall be religiously and devoutly disposed the most comfortable Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ; to be by them received in remembrance of his meritorious Cross and Passion; whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven." Elsewhere the priest says he intends to administer the Holy Communion by God's grace. Thus from the start the priest recognizes no extraordinary power within himself. The priest is simply God's agent, and as God's agent the priest purposes to give to his people the Blessed Sacrament—not just a bit of wafer and a drop of wine but food to nourish the soul, food from God, food which is God.

The reason the priest purposes to administer the sacrament is because Christ commanded it. He broke the bread and he blessed the cup and he said, "Take eat, this is my body. Drink this, this is my blood." And he went on to say that unless we take the sacrament we are spiritually dead: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

All the priest does is towards this end. All his teaching and preaching, all his shepherding and visiting is to administer to his people the Body and Blood of Christ. All else is toward the same end—all our repentances, all our contritions, all our confessions—all is that we may come to Church and receive Christ's own gift of himself. Christ willed our sanctification through the receiving of himself in communion. This is the way he planned for us to grow in grace. This is his way for our sins to be remitted, for our character to become Christlike, for our nature to become more fitted for heaven.

The Plea

In the Exhortation the priest pleads for communicants. He begs his people not to be negligent or forgetful or indifferent towards the feast of feasts. He warns them not to despise the sacrament lest they incur God's anger. He tells them the Holy Communion is God's feast and that God himself lovingly calls them and invites them to come. He pictures the thoughtless ingratitude of those who do not come. He says, "Ye know how grievous and unkind a thing it is, when a man hath prepared a rich feast, decked his table with all kind of provision, so that there lacketh nothing but the guests to sit down; and yet they who are called, without any cause, most unthankfully refuse to come. Which of you in such a case would not be moved? Who would not think a great injury and wrong done unto him? Wherefore, most dearly beloved in Christ, take ye good heed, lest ye, withdrawing yourselves from this holy Supper, provoke God's indignation against you."

Then he goes on to tell his people that when God calls and they do not respond they ought to be ashamed, and ought not to make excuses as did the chosen guests in the bible who said, I have bought a piece of land, I have bought five yoke of oxen, I have married a wife, therefore I cannot come. He tells them that all such excuses mean nothing to God. God sees through them. A man will have to die when God calls him, so we should sanctify ourselves now lest we too will be accounted unworthy of God's Supper.

To those of his people who still jeopardize their souls' salvation by not going to communion he says, By mine office as a priest in the Church of God I bid you in God's name, I call you at Christ's behest, I exhort you as you love the thought of your own salvation to come to communion. As the Lord Jesus felt constrained to suffer and to die for you so must you feel constrained to go to the altar in thankfulness for all he has done for you. And if they then persist in staying away they must regard their staying away as an act of discourtesy towards God and must expect sore punishment to lie ahead of them. They incur guilt for two reasons; one, for not accepting God's invitation to feast on Christ's Body and Blood; and, two, for separating themselves from their brethren who partake of the heavenly food.

The point of all this pleading is to get the indifferent to think about their souls' salvation, and to think about it with such deadly earnestness that through God's grace and mercy they will mend their ways. And the priest goes on to tell them that the Church will never cease to pray for them so that they may become faithful and true communicants. As the Exhortation says, "For the obtaining thereof we shall not cease to make our humble petitions to Almighty God."

Communicate Worthily

To all who plan to go to Holy Communion the priest says, "You must consider how Saint Paul exhorteth all persons to try and examine themselves before they pre-

sume to partake of the sacrament." The word *try* here should not be overlooked. It is intended to counter all those objections which tell about it being difficult to examine the soul. The point is that no matter how difficult self-examination may be we must try to do it, even though we fail at first we must learn step by step the art of self-examination through self-questionings, through self-analysis, through self-criticism. The reason so many people have no Christian humility is because they never try to see themselves as God sees them. The Exhortation sums up the matter by saying, "Judge yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord; repent you truly for your sins; have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ your Saviour; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men: so shall you be meet partakers of those holy mysteries."

The reason for all this self-examination is that we may go to God's table holy and clean, that is without any sin on the conscience and without any unforgiven sin on the soul. We are to go to communion clothed in Christ's righteousness which is the marriage garment required by God in the scriptures. He who went to the marriage feast not having on a wedding garment was cast into outer darkness. The same fate awaits us unless we are clothed in the garment of Christ.

Those who go to Communion must consider the dignity of this sacrament. Its dignity lies in the fact that our Lord instituted it as a means whereby he could give himself to us. He might have chosen some other way in which to give himself but he did not, he chose this way, and he did it that we might have a visible pledge of his love and a visible portrayal of his death on Calvary. Just how God gives us his Body and Blood is indeed a mystery. It is a gift utterly beyond our understandng to grasp, and yet this is the truth in the sacrament—at Holy Communion we feed on Christ to our eternal satisfaction.

The Rule

The standard by which we are to judge ourselves is

God's commandments. Apart from this rule there is no true standard by which to judge our conduct. Conscience alone and by itself will condone anything a wicked heart wants it to do. The standard set by the best of our neighbors is not true enough. Only God's standard will do. His standard we find in the ten commandments as interpreted by our Lord. By this rule wherein soever we find we have offended we must repent, confess, and promise amendment of life. But no bemoaning of our sins without the confessing of them will do any good, and no confessing of them without the determination to lead a better life will do any good either. Sorrow must lead to confession, and confession to full purpose of amendment of life.

The Exhortation says we must make not only restitution but satisfaction. All we have stolen must be returned, and the one against whom we have offended must be satisfied that we are sorry for our sins. We should not seek reconciliation with God without first giving satisfaction to man. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

As the Exhortation is definite as to those who should go to communion so it is definite as to those who should not go. This is what it says, "If any of you be a blasphemer of God, an hinderer or slanderer of his Word, an adulterer, or be in malice, or envy, or in any other grievous crime; repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy Table." This ruling is intended as a kindness. There is danger in going to communion when one goes in sin, it imperils the soul's health. That is why the Exhortation says, "Repent ye or come not to this holy table." Those who go in spite of this ruling obtain no advantage but rather a disadvantage since they incur the added guilt of sacrilege. As Saint Paul says, "Who soever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.' This is a hard saying and we do not understand

it, but the Church is right in telling sinners who will not repent to stay away from communion, and this for their own sakes. Saint Paul goes on to say, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

No man need stay away from the Holy Communion. No man need go on in sin. If a man knows he is living in sin he should repent and ask God for forgiveness. If a man questions that forgiveness he should see his pastor and reveal the sin that lies heavy on his soul. For this the Exhortation makes provision when it says, "Because it is requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion, but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore, if there be any of you, who by this means cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other Minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that he may receive such godly counsel and advice, as may tend to the quieting of his conscience, and the removing of all scruple and doubtfulness." This going to one's clergyman with sin upon the heart and mind is called auricular confession. It is the open confession of sin by word of mouth in the presence of a priest, and when the priest is satisfied with the penitent's contrition, and has assigned a penance, he gives absolution in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

And Be Thankful

The Exhortation tell us that thankfulness is a duty. We are to be thankful to God; first, because he gave his Son to die, thereby enabling us to become children of God and inheritors of his eternal kingdom; and second, because God caused his Son to become our spiritual food and sustenance. But it is right here that we grievously fail. We remember to thank God for Calvary but forget

to thank him for his gift of himself, and yet we never go to communion but that the priest says, "Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart, with thanksgiving."

True thankfulness shows itself in more godly living. It shows itself in purer desires, in more earnest strivings, in holier longings. It makes those who possess it more desirous of establishing Christ's kingdom on earth. To be truly thankful means to live in utter obedience to God's will accepting with a gladsome heart whatever comes to us in life as from his hand.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

ADVENT'S EMBER DAYS

The Ember Days pray for the increase of the Sacred Ministry and call for fasting, meditation, and prayer; fasting to signify our earnestness, meditation to dwell upon the Church's work, prayer to pray for the replenishment of the clergy.

The Ember Day idea goes back to the time of our Lord when he spent the night in prayer before ordaining the twelve. Thence we trace it on to the apostles who prayed before electing Matthias to the apostolate. And from there again we trace it on to those who fasted and prayed before sending forth Barnabas and Paul on their missionary journey. By setting apart these days for prayer, the Church carries on the old apostolic practice of saying, "Brethren, pray for us."

Ember Day dates go back almost one thousand years and do not vary. They are intended to come just before the times set apart by canon law for the ordination of those entering the Ministry. The prayer book rule is that the Ember Days shall always be the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, after the First Sunday in Lent, after Pentecost, after September 14, and after December 13. Thus there are twelve Ember Days each year, three for each of the four seasons of Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter.

The Ember Day Collect and Epistle and Gospel is in the prayer book on page 260 and is for all Ember Days. The Collect is the prayer, "O Almighty God, who hast committed to the hands of men the ministry of reconciliation; We humbly beseech thee, by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, to put it into the hearts of many to offer themselves for this ministry; that thereby mankind may be drawn to thy blessed kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord." There are other prayers for the clergy in the prayer book one of which teaches us to pray that our

bishops may faithfully and wisely make choice of fit persons to serve in his holy Church. Thus in rain and shine, in cold and heat our prayers ascend to God for the preservation of his Church. The Epistle is from Acts 13: 44-94, and tells how the apostles turned away from the Jews to do missionary work among the Gentiles. The Gospel is from Saint Luke 4: 16-21, and records some of the functions of the Ministry and shows our Lord preaching in the synagogue and telling his listeners that the ancient prophecy from Isaiah was that day fulfilled in their ears.

The Church's Call

The work of the Church is to shed abroad the love of God in human hearts. All are called upon to assist in this work but not all are called upon to be pastors of churches. Our particular task in spreading abroad God's love may be a very humble one, but in its way it is just as important as any other. If done devotedly, the humblest work done in God's kingdom is dear to the heart of Christ. The kind of work we do does not matter but the measure of Christian charity we put into that work matters a great deal.

Who has not seen some neighborhood Church where God's call to do his chores goes unheeded? What the place needs is someone like the woman who lost a piece of silver and who lit a candle and swept diligently until she found it. It needs someone with an incentive, the incentive of knowing that all work done for God is sacred. "I had rather be a doorkeeper," says the psalmist, "in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of the ungodly." Temple work did not give much of a living but the psalmist would rather exist on that than obtain a more sumptuous living by breaking God's commandments. Doorkeeping meant caring for the temple, being responsible for its appearance, making sure that it was opened and closed properly. The call to do that kind of work goes out constantly but it is seldom heard.

Think of all the calls that go out for teachers, for

choir singers, for helpers of one kind or another; the calls to take religion seriously, to contribute regularly, to worship faithfully. How often such calls are made and how seldom they are answered, and if answered how seldom progressed in. If men will not hear such calls which are spoken loudly enough for all to hear, how will anyone hear the call of Christ which is only whispered in the soul? Yet that call is heard, now here now there, and men volunteer to follow Christ wherever he may lead. Such responses to Christ's call are answers to prayer, answers to the Ember Day supplications.

God's Call

A man enters the Ministry because God calls him to it. Jesus said to his disciples, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you." This is always the way. It is true that a man proposes and offers himself for the work of the Church but not unless he feels himself called by God. "No man taketh this honor unto himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Heb. 5:4.

Saint Paul describes this call when he says, "Necessity is laid hold upon me to preach the gospel." This is the experience of all who take up God's work. They feel they must do it. Nothing else appeals to them. They are impelled by a divine compulsion. Like Saint Paul they say, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." Even after years in the Ministry, after they have taken many rebuffs, suffered many disappointments, endured many disillusionments, and are no longer able to endure its heartaches and heartbreaks without pain, even then, when they would like to leave the altar and rest in peace, they find that they cannot do so, so very conscious have they become that a stewardship has been entrusted to them. To paraphrase Saint Paul, When I willingly perform my ministry I experience a blessed reward, but when I am fearfully tired of it I still have to exercise myself in it because I feel that the salvation of the world has been entrusted to me. 1 Cor. 9: 16-17.

It does not follow, sadly enough, that because a man

hears God's call that he always does what God wants him to do. Jonah would not do it and God had to punish him before he would. It does not follow either that because a man has been called to the Ministry that he always lives up to its high calling. Judas did not, many a priest does not, but God is not mocked and a man never disgraces his ministry with impunity.

A Pastor's Work

After a man has been ordained to the priesthood it is his duty and privilege henceforth to be the Lord's messenger, watchman, and steward, caring for and providing for his flock, searching and seeking them out that they may be saved for ever. His work is to minister to his people preaching to them God's Word, administering baptism and celebrating Holy Communion, pronouncing absolution and giving blessing in God's name. Obviously no such work can be done faithfully unless a man does it at great sacrifice to himself, he cannot do it without being heaven's doormat all the time, he cannot do it without being God's good man in every particular.

To be a true priest a man must be a man of prayer, a man great in generosity, in selflessness, in humility, a man whose law—as the first psalm intimates—is the law of the Lord, and in whose law he meditates day and night. He must be a man who thinks primarily of his Church and his people, a man who submits willingly to his bishop because it is the Lord's will that he should obey those who have spiritual direction over him. He must be a man who carries out the old, old duties of his priesthood in simple obedience to his Lord, irksome though they be. To save his people he must be a man heroic in virtue, always blessing them through his life, his words, and his deeds.

A true pastor takes his people to God. He says their prayers, confesses their sins, makes their contritions, sings their praises, offers their sacrifices, proffers their worship. He stands in the sanctuary having his face turned towards God, offering up their united eucharists, prayers,

praises and supplications for acceptance in the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar. Standing there he represents in his person the priestly office of Jesus Christ.

Then too, a true pastor takes God to his people. In his own life he shows what it means to walk with Christ and to be with Christ and to live like Christ. He not only preaches a gospel but is a gospel. He declares God's love, carries God's pardon, administers God's sacraments. He stands among his people as God's representative. He is patient in tribulation, fearless in danger, suffering offences and enduring afflictions for Jesus' sake. In God's name he declares the everlasting gospel and does not shrink from any bitter cross imposed upon himself.

This is the Ministry of Reconciliation—that is what the Collect for the Ember Days calls it. It is the work of reconciling every man to his maker, and it is the duty of every parish priest to see that every member of his flock dies at peace with God. So many people forget about God until the last moment and then, when death comes suddenly, they cannot do much about remembering him. These dying sinners must be gotten into heaven and it is a pastor's duty to get them there. He must make sure that they all die in a state of grace, ready to appear before the Lord. To him has been given the cure of souls and he must exercise that cure. Quickly he must give them solace, speaking of sin and of a Saviour, of Christ crucified and of pardon, of contrition and of penance, for time draws short for acquiring merit in this world when one is dying. Then he must absolve them from their sins, pouring the merits of Christ's passion over their forgetfulness of God, giving them Christ's Body and Blood that Christ may keep their bodies and souls unto life everlasting. Then he must anoint their bodies, and when they are dead must remember them in his prayers.

Lest We Offend

Those who enter the Ministry come from people like ourselves. This very fact should make us very leniently disposed towards them. We know our own weaknesses

and limitations and we should not expect our clergy to be any different from ourselves. God has not two standards of conduct, one for the clergy and one for the laity, from both he expects the same measure of devotion and the same willingness to sacrifice. We should be patient and considerate, therefore, to our clergy when we feel provoked with them. Every man who enters the Ministry does so in all the enthusiasm and idealism of youth, believing he is called of God. Since the Church has accepted him as a fit person for the Ministry it is not for us to question that fitness except under very grave circumstances. Our duty lies in upholding his hands and in helping him in his work.

Our Lord condemns those who speak disparagingly of their pastors, who never help or support them in their work. Such offences he counts as done against himself. He says that all who offend his little ones—the clergy—are guilty of sin and worthy of punishment, indeed it were better for them if they had never been born. Such offenders shall be punished.

When our Lord sent out his disciples he told them he was sending them out as sheep among wolves. Then he said that all those who were helpful to them would receive a blessing, the blessing being that those who heard the disciples would hear Jesus himself. His own words were, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth the Father which sent me." The blessing is no less than a coming of God in all his fulness into the hearts of those who receive his messengers.

Our Lord's favor or disfavor to those who help or hinder the Church applies today just as it applied years ago. This Jesus taught when he said, "He that receiveth a prophet receiveth a prophet's reward." We see this principle at work in the old testament. Those who received a prophet out of high regard for his office not only benefited by the prophet's revelations but were blessed by God's nearer presence. The widow woman of Zaraphath received Elijah into her home and her blessing was twofold. She received a material blessing in that

she and her household survived the famine; and she received a spiritual blessing in that when all her troubles were over she was able to say to Elijah, "Now I know that thou are a man of God, and that the word in thy mouth is truth." Similar blessings were given to those who received Elisha. 2 Kings 4. But our Lord pronounced a curse just as clearly as he pronounced a blessing. He declared that those afflict and offend him who afflict and offend his messengers.

Evil purposed against the clergy is sacreligious and is punishable as such. This underlies the teaching in the parable of the unthankful husbandmen which foretold God's rejection of Israel because of Israel's cruel treatment of the prophets and of the crucifixion of Christ. Those who attack the Church are punished. It is a truth not to be gainsaid that evil dogs the footsteps of those who do hurt to God's messengers. Such punishment is predicted in Matthew 18 beginning with the words, "Woe unto the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

ADVENT'S ORDINATIONS

The first ordinations of the Christian year are held just after Advent's Ember Days, the ordinations being so planned that all who are to be ordained will be ready for duty on Christmas Day. Only an urgent need, such as a missionary going to the foreign field, justifies an earlier date. Ordinations are held openly in the Church. A priest presents the candidates to the bishop with an address of assurance that they are proper persons for Holy Orders but the bishop does not ordain them without first bidding anyone who objects to their ordination to come forward in God's name and state his objection. Thus the laity may prevent the ordination of any unfit person.

Before the bishop proceeds with the ordination he addresses the priest who presents the candidates with words of caution that he take care and present only such persons as are apt in learning and godly in conversation. In this way the clergy are made to feel their responsibility as regards the men they sponsor for the Ministry. Some of the bishop's words have now been transposed and put in the English prayer book for use in the Litany. The petition is a very fitting one and provides added reason for the recitation of the Litany at ordinations. This is how it reads, "That it may please thee to bless thy servants at this time to be admitted to the Order of Deacons or of Priests, and to pour thy grace upon them; that they may execute their office to the edifying of thy Church, and to the glory of thy holy name."

One general rule governing all ordinations is that no man shall be accounted a lawful bishop, priest, or deacon, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereunto.

Called

No man may enter the Ministry unless he believes he has been called of God. Every candidate must publicly

state that he feels himself to be truly called. No matter how short of men he may be, a bishop cannot go to just any group of men and say that he wants them for the Ministry. He must only select candidates from among those who feel themselves called of God. He must lay hands suddenly on no man in ordination, but must faithfully and wisely make choice of fit persons from among those who feel themselves called of God.

Anyone looking for the first time at a group of young men offering themselves for Church work must surely wonder how God dare commit his Church to human care and keeping. They seem so young and inexperienced. Few of them have done much Church work and some hardly know what Church work is all about. They express themselves very simply when questioned regarding the essentials of the faith and they vary in religious experience. No two are the same. They differ in physique, in disposition, and in temperament. Some are shy and retiring, others are self-assured and socially minded, some come from the country, others from the city. They come from every strata of society. They differ too in what they want to be. The majority simply want to enter the ministry, but occasionally this one wants to be a missionary or that one wishes to enter a monastery. They differ in intellectual ability, in educational advantage, and in business training. Offhand one might think some more suitable for the Ministry than others, but only time tells the story. One thing, and one thing only, characterizes them all. They want to do Church work and nothing else. They want to serve God and to follow in the steps of our Saviour Christ.

Tried

When a man has been approved as a candidate for the Sacred Ministry he must read for Holy Orders. How long this will take will depend upon his previous education. Sometimes it takes seven or more years, sometimes only two or three according to what a man has to do. In every divinity school men are in all stages of preparation

for the Ministry. The reason our schools can accommodate them is because they are usually attached to some university and can avail themselves of the university's facilities. The cost of seminary training is usually light, part of the cost being borne by the Church. This is why offerings are solicited for the training of the clergy.

Before a man is ordained he must be tested and tried, and a theological seminary is an excellent place for testing and trying a man. In the seminary he is under constant supervision, the professors and students living together in Christian fellowship. The seminary is like a large religious house attached to a Church to which one must repair day and night. A man may be quite unaware of what is going on but he is daily being tested and tried by the school's life and character and seclusion. Within its walls his faults and failings are clearly visible and if he has no real call to the Ministry he soon falls by the wayside.

Through the studies undertaken in the school and through the cultural associations of college life, habits of living are formed which help to qualify a man for his ministerial duties. Through forms of Christian service sponsored by the school a student gets accustomed to appearing in public. Through the daily chapel services he masters the routine of daily services, learns to appreciate the beauty of religious forms, and deepens his understanding of what religion means. Through his own prayer life he develops patience and a love of virtue, and through the kindly counsel and advice given so generously by those set over him in the Lord he learns wisdom and discretion, and can thus be vouched for by a school as a man qualified for interrogation by the bishop prior to ordination.

But, even though the school's life helps to qualify a man for his work, it really takes all the circumstances of parish life to bring out all the latent possibilities within him. No one can predict what a student may become. Surprises are always in store, for the work of the Lord takes more than book learning, more than the sheltered

seclusion of a school campus. It takes heart and devotion, understanding and fortitude, the ability to endure, the prophet's vision, the martyr's patience. It demands complete consecration of body and soul and the absolute conviction that the Church is God's instrument for saving the world.

Examined

Upon the bishop and upon the bishop alone rests the responsibility for admitting men into the Ministry. Even though a man has passed through college and school he still must satisfy his bishop that he is a proper person for Holy Orders. This knowledge the bishop obtains from the candidate's parish priest and from the school where he has been trained. The bishop must be assured both from his own personal observations, and from proper and sufficient testimony through others, that every candidate is fitted spiritually and morally for ordination before he even permits him to write his examinations.

The bishop's examinations come just prior to the customary days for ordination and are held usually within the cathedral buildings. There are two of them, one for the diaconate and the other for the priesthood. No one can sit for them without the bishop's permission. They are not difficult, presupposing as they do all the education which has gone before. These tell the bishop what he wants to know, that each candidate knows theology and understands the Church and is otherwise learned as Church law requires. Through personal interrogation the bishop soon learns whether a candidate knows the faith and understands the meaning of pastoral duties, whether he is prepared to be faithful and diligent in doctrine and sacrament, fashioning his own life by study and prayer, submitting himself to those set over him in authority.

As part of a deacon's probation he must remain for one year in the diaconate before being permitted to sit for priest's examinations. A deacon's work is to assist a priest in conducting services and in helping him in other ways. Most deacons serve in city parishes but occasionally

one gets off on his own in some country mission and reports back to the archdeacon. Thus all deacons in one way or another have the benefit of an older man's experience in parish management and pastoral technique. Before a deacon may seek advancement to the priesthood he must have shown himself competent and faithful as a deacon.

To be happy in the Ministry one must never think of one's self but of the world and its needs. One must learn to depend on God. One must say one's prayers and trust God and be content. As regards the placement of the clergy there is this to be said, Christ governs his Church. God places men, and where God places them they will do their best work. The bishop only acts in the name of Christ. His actions are all the time being overruled by God's Holy Spirit. Even when a man is hidden away and lost in some small place, he is not lost to Christ. The place that often seems the poorest turns out in the long run to have been the best. There is no place, poor and hidden away though it be, but what has its benefits and compensations. These always await the man who looks for them.

After ordination it is surprising how soon one ceases to be a layman. People look at one differently, they think of one differently, they expect one to behave differently. Things overlooked before are not overlooked after ordination. Overnight one has accepted responsibilities which must be assumed. One can no longer do as one likes or go where one likes. People think of one as a representative of the Church and they expect one to act as such. And this expectation on the part of the laity is just and proper because after ordination one no longer acts in a private capacity but in the name of the Church, administering the sacraments by its authority and giving holy absolution as one of its accredited priests.

Because a priest represents the Church he also represents Jesus Christ. This is why he must never go back to the world to work as a layman. He has the cure of souls

and he must bring all entrusted to him to that perfect state of life in Christ Jesus wherein no place is found for error in religion or for any viciousness in life. He must not slacken his hand as one who works for wages but as one who labors freely early and late. And no priest will ever go back to the world if once he understands that his ordination makes him a participant in Christ's priesthood. He is the medium through which Christ acts. What he does rightly that Christ does. In fact there is only one priest in the full sense of the word and that is Christ. When a priest baptizes it is Christ who baptizes; when he pronounces absolution it is Christ who absolves; when he offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar it is Jesus Christ who is at once both priest and victim.

No priest will ever complain about the difficulties of the Ministry when once he envisions himself as Christ's representative on earth, as another Christ—alter Christus. Instead of bemoaning his lot he will try to imitate Christ in sacrifice, in which endeavour he will exhibit outwardly in his life that sacrifice which he expresses inwardly in the sacrament he administers. And because a priest knows that he represents Christ he will feel keenly his own inadequacy and his own sinfulness. He will know that he is not worthy but this very knowledge blesses him in that it makes him depend more upon Christ. Were it not so he would labor in his own strength. He will know that he is sinful. This very knowledge will make him cry out with Saint Peter, "I am a sinful man, O Lord." This knowledge blesses him too in that he has to deal with sin and forgive sin. Mentally he must carry the sins of his people to Christ, consciously he must fight sin within himself, actually he must try to undo the evil effects of sin in the world.

As Christ's representative a priest learns that the world no more appreciates his carrying the cross than the populace cared when Jesus carried his. As Christ's representative a priest knows disillusionment, he learns he is nothing within himself, nothing apart from his office, and that the world only uses him for his office. As

Christ's representative a priest finds the world indifferent. It was always so. Jesus said, "Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children, sitting in the market place and crying to their fellows, and saying, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." As Christ's representative a priest knows discouragement. He discovers the world does not care what he says or what he does providing he does not interfere with its way of life, but if he does interfere as Christ interfered then he will be made to suffer like Christ suffered, but if a priest is content to carry the cross like Simon a little after Jesus then the world will pay no more attention to him than it paid to Simon, letting him slip silently and unnoticed away.

CHAPTER TWENTY

FOUR LAST THINGS—DEATH

For many generations it has been customary during Advent to consider the four last things—death, judgment, heaven, hell. Since all time is but the prelude to eternity, we are wise to continue that custom pondering over those things which must shortly come to pass. As one preacher puts it: "To meditate upon the last things is not fantastic, but rather the work of the wise person. Even to meditate on one's own death, that day beyond which there is no earthly tomorrow, is not morbid. One doubts whether it will either hasten or retard the coming of that day. Such meditations may help us to remember that tomorrow is not our own, but God's and that we live in expectation of his Advent."

Death Certain

Death is sure. Death's inevitability is all too apparent and yet its reality does not impress itself upon us in the same way at all times. To the young it seems unreal. To them the coming years stretch out into the distant future and death seems far away; but, as they become older, death will take on more definite form and shape. To the aged death is very real, this is because youth's friends are dead and the world beyond is peopled with them. Then, as life goes on life becomes lonelier, the body loses its strength, the limbs totter, and the memory fades, and into the mind sinks the conviction that life's little day is fast drawing to a close.

Death is a mystery. No one knows what death is. It is like life, or time, or space, or matter, or spirit, something with which we are very familiar and which we take for granted but which we cannot fathom with our minds. Many have come back from the dead but they tell us little, almost nothing, about it. The Old Testament records several risings from the dead but nothing of death's

experience. Our Lord raised Jairus' daughter, the widow's son, and called Lazarus out of the tomb but for all they said we are no wiser than before they died. Even our Lord says little of his experiences in death. Church history and medical science both vouch for resuscitations from death but say little that adds to our knowledge of what happens after death.

Death is a sleep. All that we know about death is that the body has fallen into a sleep from which it will not wake until resurrection day. So far as the body is concerned all consciousness has ceased. In death we cannot wake up or hear a loved one calling, pain and pleasure have ceased to be. We cannot worry or grieve, do good or ill, pray or repent. Only this we know, that in the grave the fool is as well off as the wise; the poor, as the rich; the infamous, as the famed; the unmourned, as the missed.

Reason We Die

There are many superficial answers to the question, Why do we have to die? Many of these answers merely tell us that it is the nature of the human body to die. The bible tells a different story, however. The bible says that death came through sin, and that had man not sinned man had not died. Many find this hard to believe but yet expect to inherit an immortal body which body we believe will arise from the dust.

Instead of asking, Why do we have to die? We should really be asking, Why do we live? The only satisfactory answer to this question is that we were created for God and for his pleasure. The reason we know that man was not created for himself alone is because no man reaches the heighth of his powers unless he has God for his goal. This is as true of the scientist and the teacher as it is of the artist and the musician. The end of man is God. Why this is so is beyond the power of man to grasp or understand, but doubtless God's purpose reaches out into eternal usefulness and into eternal glory. Of such a blessed state the bible drops a hint when it says that hereafter we shall reign with him in glory.

There are many arguments to prove that life continues beyond the grave but one argument is paramount, this rests upon man's communion with God here and now. This experience, so rich in its joy and in its strength, is self-evident—proof enough to those who have it—that life must go on after death. This communion we feel sure cannot be blotted out by death. We feel eternal life already welling up within our souls and we are sufficiently assured without any other proofs that we ourselves were made for eternity.

Other arguments confirm this belief. Man's reach to the stars has a significance far greater than a decaying body in a tomb. Such a fate leaves too much unanswered, too much unrealized. If death ends all, man's existence is senseless. Man's intuition tells him that his spirit can never die and with this verdict reason agrees. At death, the spirit of man returns to God who gave it, the body returns to the earth whence it came.

Scripture nowhere leads us to understand that just because the body is laid to rest that therefore the soul is at rest too. The peace of the grave is for the body, not the soul. Indeed, there are numerous hints in Scripture that unless a soul dies in a state of grace the soul knows no rest. Our Lord's parable of Dives and Lazarus depicts a soul that cannot rest, a soul that ever remembers its own selfish existence on earth.

The bible gives an answer to the question, Why do we have to die? and it is the most satisfactory answer that has ever been given. It is to be found in Acts 1:25 and it refers to the death of Judas, and the words tell why death came to him. The words are: "that he might go unto his own place." His life had created a definite place for him in eternity and the time had come for him to fill it. It was the best place for him, the place which in spite of all our Lord's teachings he had chosen for himself by his coveteousness and lies. This then is the reason we die. As descendants of Adam and subject to death we enter through the grave and gate of death into our own place

where, if God so permits, we are purged from our sins and made ready for the great resurrection day.

Not to Fear

The bible tells us to be ready for death but not to fear it. We are to fear God, not death. We get rid of any fear of death when we trust in God and leave all issues in his hands. Those who refuse to think of death because they dread it relegate the fear of it to some secret recess of the mind only to have it suddenly come forward when they are least able to cope with it. Death holds no fear at any time if only we learn to trust in God and follow Jesus Christ.

This truth the prayer book teaches when it tells us to seek Christ's company in communion now. It tells us to seek him, to live with him, to feed upon him. All our prayer book ministrations are to enable us to lie down at peace with God and man. One rubric tells the clergy to get their parishioners to prepare for death beforehand so that when it comes they will have a good and happy death instead of feeling afraid.

To take away any fear of death the prayer book instructs the clergy as follows: "Forasmuch as all mortal men are subject to many sudden perils, diseases and sicknesses, and ever uncertain what time they shall depart out of this life; therefore, to the intent they may always be in readiness to die, whensoever it shall please God to call them, the ministers shall diligently from time to time, but especially in time of pestilence, or other infectious sickness, exhort their parishioners to the often receiving of the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ, when it shall be publicly administered in the Church, that so doing, they may, in the case of sudden visitation, have the less cause to be disquieted for lack of the same."

The same teaching—that we should be ready for death but not fear it—runs all through the Visitation of the Sick. This service is intended to take away all fear of death through the full and proper acceptance of the

Christian faith. The clergy are directed to explain the meaning of sickness and to present it as a great opportunity for drawing near to God, the hope being that the sick one will offer himself up to God in his sickness so that he will bear patiently that which God in his wisdom may see fit not to remove.

Wherever there is any question concerning a sick man's faith a pastor is directed to reveal to him the true faith, and to get him to repent him of his sins and to make a confession of his sins. He is especially urged to get the sick one to forgive others their offences, to make reparation for his own, and so make his peace with God. On evidence of his repentance, he is to absolve him from all his sins. Here again the pastor's assurance of God's mercy and forgiveness, assuring the dying one of his salvation and that he is entering the shadow of death with Christ, should remove all real fear of death. The same assurance of Christ's presence is to be given to any man who for any just impediment is unable to receive the blessed sacrament before he dies. His pastor is to tell him that if he truly repents him of his sins and steadfastly believes that Christ died to save him "he doth eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he does not receive the sacrament with his mouth."

Should Hallow Death

A dead body should never be treated as a thing of naught but should be treated respectfully and held sacred. It was the temple of the soul, the means whereby God brought into existence a living spirit. From the dust of this selfsame body God will reform an immortal body. On judgment day each soul will be re-united with its own body and then all who rest in Jesus will be sinless and incorruptible forever.

There are two ways provided for hallowing the dead. One is the simple burial service on page 324 in the prayer book and the other is the burial Mass on page 268. The choice of these two services is generally left open to

the family of the deceased. A requiem is often said after the funeral. This is an ancient and desirable service. It is particularly fitting where the deceased has been a devout communicant emphasizing, as it does, the unbroken communion of the church on earth with all those who have entered into paradise.

The committal of the body to mother earth should be done tenderly. These are fond remains, means whereby we have received our own lives. Eyes that have looked upon us tenderly. Hands that have done us many kindnesses. Feet that have run for us many errands of mercy. Ears that have been quick to hear our cries. A body which has loved us and which we have loved, the outward and visible sign of a soul for whom Christ died; a body which we hope again to behold in a new and transformed form. Such a body should be laid aside lovingly and prayerfully. It should be performed as a religious act, reverently and with dignity, as befits a service done for God.

Christian burial is very simple, it has little to do with all the unnecessary paraphernalia of modern funerals. The body simply need be taken to church to be in the presence of Christ during the Communion. The scriptures are read for solace and assurance. The soul is committed to God's care and keeping. The body is put into the earth to rest. As the casket is lowered into the grave, the minister gives three casts of earth upon the body to symbolize Christian burial and to give significance to the words, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Nothing more is necessary.

When friends attend funerals, they should attend, not to gawk and to talk, but to pray. Thus will they show true respect. As the deceased prayed for his friends, now he should be prayed for in return. Every kindly sentiment should resolve itself into a prayer that Almighty God will grant to the dead one all the development of which his soul is capable. Although it cannot be exactly and distinctly stated what benefits the dead receive by these prayers yet we are assured that God hears them

and answers them. As we pray for the living so we pray for the dead, believing that the Church is one and that its members comprise both the living and the dead and that through Christ we have communion one with another.

In hallowing the dead we should never be mawkish or morbid. Everything we do or say should always be accompanied with a strong note of sober and hopeful Christian assurance. Mourners should be bidden to look away from their own selfish sorrows and to look forward to that day when the power of the risen Christ will bring to life again that body which now lies in the grave. In the meantime God will brood over the darkness, the sadness, the bitterness, and the thraldom of death, for he in his goodness plans to open every grave that the dead may live eternally with him in his glory.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

FOUR LAST THINGS—JUDGMENT

A world of law and order necessitates an accounting. This accounting is universal and inexorable and operates with mathematical certainty. All our weights and measures prove it. It is true of the moral sphere just as it is true of the material universe.

All nature testifies to the truth of this principle. When we cooperate with nature she is generous in her rewards but when we violate her laws she exacts a heavy toll. No physician can help or prevent the diseases and infirmities which follow the persistent breaking of nature's laws.

Man has always believed that well-doing is rewarded and wrong-doing is punished, that he is rewarded for obeying the laws of the universe and punished for disobeying them. We regard this operation in the natural sphere as due to cause and effect but in the moral realm as due to God's holy justice.

Judgment Sure

The scriptures say judgment is certain if not in this life then in the next. They reveal that man is subject not only to the laws of nature but also to the laws of God. God revealed to man a way of life and gave him commandments to live by, and every man must account for the way he has lived. When warning his converts of the certainty of judgment Saint Paul wrote, "It is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment."

In the bible we see God's judgments in operation. Instances are recorded where judgments have descended swiftly upon men and nations. Sometimes, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, this is because the cup of iniquity has overflowed; and sometimes, as in the case of Pharoah at the Red Sea, this is because God thought it best to prevent further evil.

Then there are instances of delayed judgments as, for instance, when Jonah was sent to tell the Ninevites that God was going to destroy them but, upon their repentance, God did not destroy them, from which we gather that cities as well as individuals may repent and be saved even at the eleventh hour.

There are also those judgments of which the psalmist spoke. He had seen the wicked flourishing like a green bay tree and could not see why God allowed them to live until he went into the Sanctuary of God and then he realized that God was mercifully giving them every opportunity to repent, hoping against hope that before the end they would look unto him and be saved.

Every judgment of God is based on righteousness. In righteousness three principles are involved—holiness, justice, mercy. These three principles temper all God's dealings with man. That is why God's judgments are better than our own. That is why we can trust God's judgments as being the best, the wisest, and the truest that can ever be devised. When we see the sins of the fathers being visited upon the children, instead of questioning God's justice we should recognize that God's law works that way and take care that no child ever suffers through our offence. In this world we shall see many flagrant abuses apparently going unpunished but God's Word assures us that God deals in righteousness and that we may implicitly trust him to balance the scales in true equity on judgment day.

Judgment Holy

God's judgment is holy. Holiness means wholeness, that which is free from sin and from sinful affections. For God's judgment to be holy it must cleanse, uplift, and purify. This is what God's judgment does to the souls of men, it cleanses them, purifies them, and uplifts them. This is what it must do before man can ever enter into God's presence.

Man's sense of fair play tells him that evil cannot be just overlooked and forgotten as though it had never

been; that there must be an accounting, a reckoning up, satisfaction made; that every man must have his just deserts. So a lawbreaker is taken before a judge who judges him justly according to law. God is man's judge and by God's laws will man be judged. In those laws the love of God comes first, and through that love we know that God's standard of holiness, and not our own, is the only proper standard of judgment.

God's judgment makes for holiness. The fact, that God declares all unholiness abhorrent to him and merits his wrath, helps to impress upon our minds the wickedness of sin. Thus the fear of God's judgment acts as a deterrent. We know certain things incur God's wrath, this tends to make us walk more carefully in the straight and narrow path. Thus the fear of God's judgment is a holy fear and saves us from committing many sins which otherwise we would commit.

God's judgment makes for righteousness. We know this is so because the fear of God's wrath is at last seen to be a very blessed thing when once we have learned to do right. That which at first we feared to do for fear of the consequences becomes as we grow in grace a fear of doing wrong because it is an unholy thing to do. Thus we come to hate evil because it is contrary to God's will. Through God's judgment we first feared to do wrong but eventually loved to do right.

The fear of judgment to come acts as an incentive to holiness, as an incentive to endure every temptation as seeing him who is invisible. It acts as a stimulant to the weak and as a goad to the careless, inciting them to watch and pray. It has also a very salutary effect upon all who try to do right when they would benefit by doing wrong. The fact that they know that their righteousness will one day be justified before all men enables them to withstand all pressure of temptation.

Judgment Just

Christians have no fear but that God will judge in equity. Apart from all references in the bible to God's

justice we know God will be just because he has done everything possible to redeem us from sin. Thus we have confidence in our judge because he is our saviour, and we have confidence in his power to judge righteously because he is God.

While judgment is here and now, and we do experience suffering for our sins in this world, the final verdict of God will not be given before judgment day. Then Christ will come to commend or to condemn. No power will withstand him. Veils and deceptions will be torn asunder and our sins will stand revealed in their true shape and color. Then the sinner will stand self-condemned without his wedding garment, as our Lord says.

Judgment will be correlative. It will proceed from a man's own soul and it will proceed from Christ on his throne. We shall not walk into heaven just because heaven's doors are open nor shall we descend into hell just because we are conscious of sin. Christ will know our merits and our demerits. Until the day of judgment we may hide from ourselves and from our neighbors the black festering sores that lie deep within our souls but on judgment day they will be visible for all to see. The reason why the wicked sometimes escape sore judgment in this world is because God permits the tares to grow among the wheat. But, this is our faith, judgment will come though it be long delayed. This is in agreement with the apostle's warning: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, as a man soweth so shall he also reap."

The good we have done will not be forgotten. Of this we are assured in Saint John's picture of the judgment. He writes: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." However fanciful and symbolical this picture may be, this underlying truth

is clear and plain. Nothing will be overlooked and no one will be forgotten. There will be no doubt as to the kind of life we have lived, it is recorded and will show itself. There will be no doubt as to the kind of judgment we shall receive, it will be the right one, and we shall know it to be a just one for it will be the best for us.

Judgment Merciful

God will judge in mercy. The verdict we shall receive before the great white throne will be a holy judgment, mercy tempering justice. We know Christ will grant us mercy because he bore our sins on the cross.

Justice is often defined as an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but with mercy tempering justice God will inflict a lighter punishment than the law warrants because his benevolent heart will overlook the injury we have done to him. God's mercy will not override God's justice because his justice will be satisfied since he himself made up our deficiency by suffering in our stead. God remains just even though he extends mercy, he himself having paid our debt by substituting himself as the bearer of our sins, and so great is his mercy to man that he can save even to the uttermost.

We marvel that a sinner upon his deathbed can cry unto the Lord and be saved, such mercy being too great for us to comprehend, yet we know within ourselves that God's mercy is higher than the heavens above and deeper than the depths beneath. Christ will save all who call upon him. He will put his grace in their hearts and will clothe them in his righteousness. Yet, for all of God's mercy, many will never enter heaven not because God is unmerciful but because his loving kindness will find no response in their hearts.

The unrepentant will not enter heaven. The extension of mercy to them would do no good, it would not enable them to grow in grace. The unrepentant choose evil even when the good is presented to them. When a sinner clings to his sins, prefers them to God, hugs them to himself as the dear treasures of his soul, then Christ must if he be

holy, merciful, and just, utter that fearful sentence of banishment: "Depart from me, I never knew you." It is a terrible thought that man can choose hell to heaven but he does it in this life and he will do it in the next.

For those who love the Lord, however, judgment day will hold no fears. For them there will be no forebodings, no terrors, no dark and melancholy past to confront. As Saint Paul says, "There is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." None of these stand in peril of being cast out into outer darkness. All of them will be numbered among the redeemed ones, among those whose robes have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

For God's saints judgment day will be a day of justification, a day when their faith will be made manifest before all men. This will be the day when each will receive his proper reward. This is a bible promise and like all bible promises it is written deep in God's heart. What these rewards will be we can only conjecture. They will be spiritual, suited for an heavenly sphere. Each child of God will receive a reward in accordance with his service and in accordance with his power to receive the same. On that day all that we have ever been in character, in holy living, in Christian charity, will be clearly visible; and God, who seeth in secret all the time will then openly reward that which has been for so long hidden.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

FOUR LAST THINGS—HEAVEN

A very common answer to the question, Where is heaven? is the answer, Heaven is where God is. This is indeed true. Every godly person wants to be where God is. But more—Heaven is that blessed place where you and I will be reunited with those we love, and where we will possess all those wonderful virtues and powers promised in the bible.

No one knows where heaven is but we are sure that we will get there. God got us to earth and we do not know where this earth is except in its relation to other planets. We know, of course, that it is—to use the language of scripture—in the hollow of God's hand but beyond that we do not know. We sense the nearness of heaven. At times it presses in upon us from all sides. We know it lies within ourselves and we believe it lies all about us. We believe it is a condition into which we enter the more nearly as we approach to God.

The Way

There is only one way to heaven, there never was any other way, and that way is through God. We enter heaven as we approach God. Heaven is conformity with God's will, it is a holy condition, a spiritual state. Anyone is free to enter it. Heaven is for all who will avail themselves of Christ's merciful pleading from the cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' And for all such, even for those who make an eleventh hour repentance, Christ's voice of mercy will prevail against the voice of the avenger.

We like to think of heaven as a place with gates wide open for all to enter. That is just what heaven is. God said, Whosoever will may enter. He said that long before we were born. So we are quite sure that anyone who stays out of heaven will do so of his own free will. Only

the desire to sin will shut anyone out. Nothing can enter there that defileth or worketh abomination or maketh a lie. Heaven would not be heaven if sin could enter there.

That there will be many who will never enter heaven is without question. From first to last scripture alludes to those who go down into hell, warning its readers to flee from the wrath to come and to seek the Lord while he may be found. Our Lord himself spoke of many being called but few chosen. Typical among his sayings are the words: 'Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, few there be that find it.' Almost the last words in the bible speak of those whom God will not allow to enter into the holy city.

How God is able to make any of us worthy of eternal habitation with him, no one knows. Only the power of his Holy Spirit can do it. To forgive our sins will not suffice. We have our sins forgiven now but keep right on sinning. We will need to be transformed. We will need to have our hearts' desires cleansed, purified, and uplifted. We will need to be kept free from the power of sin, and the promise is that we shall be. We believe that in that place of purgation beyond the grave, the souls of the faithful departed are being transformed into Christ's likeness. Our ultimate sanctification—worthiness to dwell with God—is possible providing we die in a state of grace, as a participant in the nature and life of God. To think otherwise would be to doubt God's power and God's holiness.

Our Expectations

We expect immortality in heaven. Without immortality heaven would be another earth. We may not know all that is involved in the thought of immortality but we do know that we do not want to rise from the dead only to die again. A still more intolerable thought—if such were possible—is the thought that we might rise imperfect from the dead, tainted with sin and subject to Satan.

Heaven will be heaven only if we rise sinless from the grave progressing in the knowledge and likeness of Christ throughout the endless ages. Such perfection is what the bible promises. Christ died that we might stand forever perfect before God. God meant that perfection to be the outcome of our creation, the fruit of our growth, the final triumphant result of all his dealings with us, and he will bring it to pass. A heaven without perfection is not what we expect, we want perfect immortality and want to be forever sinless.

We want the after life to be a continuation of this life. We want to be the same persons hereafter as we are now. Personality is a real possession. We want to be ourselves. We do not like the thought of forgetting all the past, we want to remember it bitter though some of it may be. We want to come to life again as the beings we know. We believe in the resurrection of the dead, that is of ourselves, and not in the creation of altogether new personalities.

Also we expect to meet in heaven all whom we have loved long since and lost awhile. Love demands the reunion of lost ones and the renewal of those friendships we have formed on earth. It is impossible to believe that the divinest feelings we have known were born simply to die. We cannot believe that the broken hearted and the disappointed will rise from the dead never to have their hopes realized. We want to know each other there. That is heaven's expectation. There would be no joy in looking forward to a heaven in which we were unknown. We want to meet again on that other shore.

Heaven's Expectations

Heaven will expect us to live in accordance with its laws. All the inhabitants of heaven must be able to live in peace and harmony. Many of us do not think of this when we speak of going to heaven. We think of heaven as a lovely place to go to, but seldom think of the responsibilities we must assume there. We think of heaven as a reward for ourselves without giving a thought to the

truth that we shall have to put into heaven much that we get out of it.

Heaven will expect us to love God above everything else. On this depends the very structure of heaven. God must come first. Everything must centre in him. This is the essence of the worship of God which never ceases in heaven. In heaven we shall worship God face to face, and that worship will consist largely in the continual offering of our heart's devotion.

Heaven will expect us to live in charity with others. On earth we may live in selfish isolation from our fellows but this we cannot do in heaven. Heaven is a society and heaven's life must be lived in company with others. In heaven we shall have to be selfless, for selflessness will be the essence of our heavenly happiness. Unless all are selfless there cannot be any heaven, for heaven depends upon the perfect communion of heart with heart and mind with mind.

Heaven will expect us to serve God. Saint John tells us heaven is for service and not for contented idleness. When we consider all the pains that God took to create and redeem man we must conclude that God had some divine purpose when he created him, he must have needed him for some purpose. He must have a place for him to fill, some work to do, some great service which the created angels cannot do. In heaven we shall serve God sometimes visibly sometimes invisibly, like Moses and Elijah on Mount Olivet.

Heaven will expect us to reign with Christ. To reign with Christ means that we shall be called upon to bear heavy responsibilities in his kingdom. What these responsibilities are we are not told but we get a hint as to their nature in the welcome given to the faithful servant in our Lord's parable. Our Lord found him worthy of added responsibility: "Well done, good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will set thee ruler over many things." The thought suggests the delegation of many powers.

How Dwell There?

The reason why we shall be able to dwell in heaven is because we shall stand forever faultless before God's throne. When we awake on that other shore, we shall awake like Christ—in his likeness. Our human limitations will have been removed, and the bonds of earth will hold us no more. Our heavenly bodies will be like our Lord's risen body, pure and stainless.

When our Lord was so wonderfully transfigured on the Mount, Moses and Elijah appeared in glory before Peter, James, and John, and so glorious was their appearance that these disciples offered to build three shrines for them. "One for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias," thereby placing them apparently on the same level with our Lord. All three transformed bodies appeared the same so the proffered obeisance is not surprising. Our glorified bodies will be like their's. We shall awake in his likeness and that is why we shall be able to dwell in heaven.

Another reason why we shall be able to dwell in heaven is because we shall be upheld by God's righteousness. There we shall see God face to face in all his glory, surrounded by all his saints, and with all his holy angels. We shall see our King in all his beauty. We shall see him as the creator of all spirits, as the sanctifier of all people, as our Saviour with all the marks of his passion. This will be the most blessed sight we shall ever behold, one which will at the same time both help and inspire us to desire only God's will.

The vision of the Lord will enable us to dwell in heaven for that vision will not only be beautiful to behold but also enlightening to the beholder. Darkness will become light; and light, knowledge; and knowledge, understanding. What this will mean—the seeing of truth as God sees it—passes man's understanding. It will be to see the beginning and the ending, to know the answer to the riddle of the universe, to fathom the mystery of being, to comprehend the reason for existence, to understand the greatness of divine power. It will be to adore holiness

and purity, and to love beauty, truth and goodness. Such a vision will free the soul from the power of sin.

Thus the vision of God will enable us to live in heaven. Thenceforth we shall be immortal, sinless, ministering spirits, intelligences, powers, the equal of angels, the servants of God. Human language cannot express all that the presence of God and the beholding of him face to face will mean. We can only conjecture what it will mean. Perhaps no words are fraught with so much meaning as are the words of Saint John when he says, "As many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Then, as going up to sublimer heights, he said, "Now are we the sons of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." In that day we shall not be tempted by the sight of the forbidden tree in the midst of the garden of God, concerning which Satan said to Eve, God doth know that in the day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods."

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

FOUR LAST THINGS—HELL

There is no more unpopular subject than hell. Men do not wish to talk about it. The reason usually given for not wishing to talk about it—its non-existence—has no basis in logic but is merely an excuse for not wishing to discuss an unpleasant subject. The real reason why men do not wish to talk about hell is because it stands for retribution.

Hell questions our way of life, it recalls sin, it places us before the bar of judgment. By not talking about hell we are able to push the thought of it into the background and quiet our consciences, save ourselves the trouble of having to make decisions and forget our duties to God.

The sad result of our refusal to talk about hell is that we are so far able to forget about it that when we come to die we have no opportunity to remember it, and often enter the next world without having made any reparation for our sins in this. The irony of disbelieving in hell is that men no sooner begin disbelieving in it than they begin to create for themselves and for others a hell on earth.

Why Hell?

Hell is not something which is solely in the next world, it has its beginnings in this and casts its dark shadows about us. Everywhere we witness men creating hells for themselves. We see them sinking lower and lower in the moral scale until any form of goodness is hateful to them. The depths to which human beings can sink are unbelievably low. They can go down from one vile crime to another until hell itself hardly seems deep enough to contain them. The more we see of man's degradation the more we have to postulate hell.

We understand the meaning and purpose of hell better when we think of it as a merciful provision in God's

universe for compelling those to do God's will who would not otherwise do it. The lost in hell have to obey God whether they will or not, for hell is a place of compulsion. Here the analogy of an earthly prison is helpful. Prisoners who will not obey the law in freedom have to obey it in confinement.

So long as God grants man freewill hell is necessary, for with freewill man can thwart God, he can make his own spirit eternally imperfect and unfit for free association with God in heaven. With freewill man can ally himself with evil, quench the Spirit's striving, enslave himself to Satan, and descend to unbelievable depths in hell.

Hell is necessary for heaven. The prayers of the saints that they may live and serve God without hindrance cannot be answered unless God remove the wicked. The wicked must be segregated if they are to cease from troubling. On earth we have prisons to confine those who are a menace to society, in the after world hell will perform a similar function.

God's holiness demands a hell. If God is to cleanse, purify, and redeem his people he must banish from their presence all that would contaminate them. In heaven we shall be saved not only from the power of sin but also from its presence, too.

God's justice demands a hell. Sin must be punished. We live in a moral universe and every sinful act must be atoned for. Retribution must be just. To suggest that God can overlook sin is to forget the purpose of mercy. Mercy is not to offset justice but to help a sinner redeem himself. To forgive sin irrespective of a sinner's desire for holiness is to let a man continue unchecked in his sin.

Hell is as necessary to the universe as is the sense of pain to the human body. Without hell there would be no assurance of justice, no world order, no moral universe, no freedom, no heaven. To remain sovereign Lord, God must set bounds for those who defy his authority.

Who Go to Hell?

Speaking generally, those go to hell who are unfit for heaven, the reason being that they will never serve God willingly and are therefore incapable of spiritual growth. Speaking theologically, those go to hell who die in their sins, the reason being that they are not participants in the nature and life of God, having no grace in their hearts and no resemblance to Christ in their features.

So often people ask, How can God send any man to hell? The truth of the matter is that while from one standpoint God banishes a sinner to hell, from another standpoint man sends himself there to satisfy his own ungodly desires. At death every man finds his own moral level. We see this principle already beginning to operate in this world. Never a day goes by but what we can see men gravitating towards the kind of life they seek, and they gravitate towards it unerringly. On one side of the street we see men going to Church and to God, and on the other side we see them going to sin and to Satan.

As regards hell we may trust God implicitly. God will not willingly confine anyone there. God is infinitely more merciful and more just than we are. God created every soul for an eternal purpose—to reign with him in glory. Well may we believe that before God condemns any man to hell he will grant him every opportunity to enter into heaven.

No man will ever be sent to hell because God is unwilling to forgive his sin. God freely forgives, but sometimes man does not profit by that forgiveness. Forgiveness is valueless except in so far as it saves man from rebelling against God's will. As a man can resist God's holiness so he can resist God's mercy, thus forgiveness would not prevent the damned going to hell. God could presumably take away man's freewill, and thus save him, but in doing so God would defeat the purpose of creation which is to create free spirits in Christ's likeness.

Hell's Sufferings?

The bible describes the sufferings of hell in terms we

can understand. So when we read in the bible of hell's fires, hell's torments, the worm that eateth, darkness, and the like, we should understand that the bible is using human words to convey to us spiritual experiences.

Our Lord describes the sufferings of hell in a very vivid and personal way. He depicts real pain, real separation, real punishment. Hell is the place of damnation. He pictures Dives as being in torments asking for a drink of water to cool his tongue; the unprofitable servant as being cast out into outer darkness; the wicked as being bundled together ready for the burning; the damned as suffering the same fate as the devil and his angels.

Surely these bible references mean that those in hell feel degradation over their imprisonment; surely they experience bitterness when they see a great gulf separating them from the redeemed; surely they sense frustration at having to obey God in hell; surely they know remorse when they know their chance to do right willingly has gone forever. To refuse to serve God willingly in heaven but yet have to obey him under confinement in hell, is hell indeed.

Perhaps the bitterness of hell consists in loving the things we hate. In drug fiends, a pleasurable servant becomes a fiendish master. In liquor drinkers, an animating drink becomes a stupifying poison. All such crave the stuff they come to hate. At first these could stop but now they must go on even though it means sacrificing home, friends, business. These once could touch or leave alone but now they cannot help themselves, they lack the power to raise themselves.

Perhaps the remorse of hell consists in hating the things we should love. We should love righteousness and truth, the wicked hate them. We often see this happen even in this life. To the morally bad, the presence of the morally good is often annoying. We have seen the good hated, the church made a target for abuse, the name of God cursed.

In Wisdom 11:16 we read: "By what things a man sinneth by the same also shall he be punished." This prin-

ciple of punishment operates in hell surely. Even in this life the pleasures of sin become as bitter as wormwood. This will be doubly true in the next life. To reject God in this life will mean to sense the sad lack of him in hell. As one preacher puts it: "The wicked do not want hell because they enjoy its torments; they want hell because they do not want God. They *need* God, but they do not want him."

Does Hell End?

Sometimes people wonder if hell is not a temporary kind of prison through which a soul may pass on its way to heaven after having suffered therein for a limited duration of time. Such it cannot be. Only in this life can we voluntarily love right for righteousness sake. When we wake up on judgment day we shall know that righteousness is worthwhile and we shall no longer be counted virtuous for loving it.

Satan's question concerning Job is pertinent here; Doth Job serve God for naught? Only on earth could Job do that. Only on earth can we serve God by faith, in heaven we will see God face to face and know that it pays to serve God. Only in this life may we offer our lives a willing sacrifice and have that willingness carry over into eternity.

To limit hell's duration would necessitate the limiting of the mind's remembrance of sin; of the mind's love of the world, the flesh, and the devil; of the mind's determination to resist God. This would be tantamount to a change of personality after death, the very thing we do not want to happen because part of heaven's joy will consist in the remembrance of God's mercy on earth.

The bible holds out no hope of a temporary hell. In the bible the same words describe the eternity of heaven as describe the eternity of hell, and for anyone to suggest that heaven may be for a limited duration of time only is an intolerable thought. Moreover, our Lord says hell is eternal. Of Dives and Lazarus he said, "They that would pass to you from thence cannot." Our Lord's words,

"Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched," are intelligible only on the understanding that hell is forever.

From every analogy of this life we conclude that hell never ends. Only the young appear to be able to change. As we grow older our ways become set and we keep on growing more and more like ourselves in mind, body, and soul. From this we gather that as we fall in death so we lie, to travel further on after the resurrection in the path we have already chosen.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

ADVENT'S LAST HOURS

Another Advent Season is rapidly drawing to a close. Since our Lord delays his coming in glory, our thoughts must now turn back to the grace and sweetness of his first coming. Once more we must make ready to commemorate his Nativity or that old world story will repeat itself, Joseph and Mary will seek shelter and find none because there is no room for them in the inn.

If we liken the Church to the Manger, the innkeeper represents those millions of Christians who never prepare to meet the coming Lord. His coming has to take care of itself. Joseph and Mary have to shift for themselves along with God's meaner creatures, the ox and the ass, in the stall.

The Manger

The Manger, clean or unclean, must accommodate the coming Christ. As those who profess to love the Lord we must make ready for that woman who travels towards Bethlehem. Even though we may be overwhelmed with life's duties we must make sure that the Manger is made ready for Christ's birth.

The Manger Scene must be set up, the evergreens put in position, poinsettas placed upon the altars. The walls and floors must be cleaned, candles blessed, altars dressed, choir boys robed before the Christ Mass can be sung.

Shepherds must be directed to the Manger. These need angel voices to tell them Christ is born. Some will feel no need of Christ, but they need their sins forgiven just as we. Others will need prodding. These are those who would make merry without first saying Happy Christmas to him for whom we hold Christmas. All must be directed to the Manger that all may worship at the Christ Child's feet.

The Manger must be provisioned and cared for. We must help. We must be to Wise Men as the light of the guiding star. We must light the way to Christ that all may proffer gifts to him. The best gift is heart and mind and soul. This is why we must lead men to the Manger, that they may experience a great love for Christ. Love gives. Love finds expression in sacrifice. Love unlocks the treasures we have to give, and here at the Manger we learn to give our heart's love to Christ.

We open here our treasures and our gifts;
And some of it is gold,
And some of it is frankincense,
And some of it is myrrh;
And some has come from plenty, some from joy,
And some from deepest sorrow of the soul.

It is tragic how many gifts we indirectly hold back from Christ. Others do not see our feeble light shining in the darkness and so come not to the Manger. Having no love, they offer no gift, and he whose birthday it is gets nothing.

Helping in the Manger

The bible says nothing about anyone helping the Virgin Mary to present her Son to the waiting world. Joseph was there we know, but there must have been some other kind soul, some woman from the inn who lent a hand in Mary's hour of need. If such there was, she represents those who do good in this world but whose names never go down to posterity.

The Nativity is one of the most sacred commemorations that can be imagined but unless we help to tell it forth to the world it degenerates even among its hereditary friends until it becomes little more than a day for eating and drinking, a day for visiting friends, for gaming, gluttony, and excess. We must help in some quiet and unobtrusive way to present Christ to others. Unless we uphold Christmas Day we help to blot out its yearly remembrance in the minds of men.

In the second century Tertullian said this beautiful thing about Christ, "He has changed the sunset to sunrise." Through him darkness becomes light and gloom changes into joy. We have seen this happen time and time again but especially on Christmas Eve. Even the last dark days of Advent are enlivened and enlightened in anticipation of Christmas. Then, with a burst of love and goodwill, the sun rises on Christmas morning and all are happy in its warmth. Millions of souls are cheered and encouraged at the glad happening of long ago. In very truth Christ came to give the rose and to take all thorns away.

Many of course will not listen to the glad tidings. No matter how beautifully we depict the scene some will not look to see its beauty. Painters have tried to make it entrancing, musicians have tried, preachers have tried but all to no avail. The only way these will ever be made to see its beauty is by experiencing it through love, through that love of Christ which constrains us to do loving deeds. So we must be helpers at Christ's birth in doing good deeds. We must spend ourselves in love.

We should sense unworthiness as we answer the call to help at the Manger. We are sinners yet called to be saints, heirs of eternal life, destined to be helpers of our brethren. If we remember this we can spend ourselves in love and it will not matter if our loving kindness is unnoted or unrepaid. Love given is never lost, it enriches ourselves even when it is lost on others. The way to be happy helping at the Manger is in loving and in showing forth Christ. This is what God did. In love he came from heaven and in love he died upon the cross, so he did not mind the pain.

So much we miss
If love is weak; so much we gain
If love is strong; God thinks no pain
Too sharp or lasting to ordain
To teach us this.

If ever we think our work at the Manger is not suffi-

ciently appreciated or blessed, the remedy lies not in feeling sorry for ourselves and in giving up our work but in expending ourselves in greater love and devotion.

The Christ Mass

The word Christmas is made up of two words, Christ and Mass. It is a shortened form of Christ Mass in contradistinction to Easter Mass or to the Mass of the Holy Ghost on Whitsunday. On Christmas Day the Church celebrates the Holy Communion in honor of the birth of Jesus, and unless we go to Communion on that day we have not kept Christmas. We may have kept the feast by eating and drinking but we have not kept Christmas. Christmas has nothing to do with eating and drinking but with the offering up of the Holy Communion in honor of the birth of Jesus, and the Church expects every good churchman to celebrate the Christ Mass.

Many will go to Communion on Christmas Day without giving much thought to what they do. The meaning of what they do will not register in their minds. They will go to the altar as a matter of course and forget about it almost before they leave the Church. Perhaps this was the case with those who attended the Blessed Virgin at the birth of her child. To them it may have been just another birth, something to be gotten over with and another task started. Perhaps the task was done without any thought of the greatness of the event, without any knowledge that God was present in human flesh, without any consciousness of the great privilege of cradling the infant in their arms.

We who know how great was their privilege wonder at their blindness and lack of comprehension, and yet we are often guilty of the same blindness and lack of comprehension ourselves. Our Lord comes to us in the Blessed Sacrament and we know it not. We feel no awe, sense no privilege, are not aware of our Lord's great humility or of our own unworthiness when Christ condescends to come to us under the forms of bread and wine. We know others are guilty of failing to discern the

Lord's Body when they do not communicate at the altar and we know that we are guilty of the same thing too when we make no provision for our loved ones to communicate. When we value Christ's gift in the Sacrament we not only go to Communion ourselves but we see to it that our loved ones go too.

Even now we should be preparing for our Christmas Communion. No unforgiven sin must lie on the soul nor any unholy desire dwell in the heart. Since we plan to receive at the midnight hour out of reverence we should fast for at least two hours preceding the midnight hour, and we will fast when we are conscious of the greatness of our privilege. The dignity of this Sacrament lies in the fact that through it we shall cradle the Christ Child in our souls.

Holy Night

We sing *Holy Night* on Christmas Eve. It is a holy night, holy because Christ brought the holiness of heaven down into the unholiness of earth. Its holiness touches and softens all mankind. Its peace enlightens earth's blackness like the tender shining of a star. For one brief moment its example of love and brotherhood makes men's hearts feel hopeful and confident again. We must prolong that moment, and we can prolong it by heeding Saint Paul's exhortation to put away from us all anger, and clamor, and all evil speaking, together with all malice, and by being kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. We can prolong that moment by praying for peace, by promoting love and unity within the Church and by fostering brotherhood and goodwill among men. Every time we heal a quarrel or knit together a severed friendship we spread abroad that spirit of holiness which is akin to the peace of God.

On Christmas Eve we sing the Song of Christmas. We should put into this song all the joy and gladness the angels put into it, because there would have been no glory in heaven and no peace on earth without Christ.

We should sing this song worshipfully looking forward with expectant hearts to receiving Christ in the Sacrament. We love the Lord and long to meet him but he warns us against attempting to love him without loving our brothers too. Thus our sympathies should go out to the poor, the hungry, and the oppressed; we should help the sick and comfort those that mourn; we should be friendly towards the lonely and the unloved, mindful of little children and thoughtful towards the aged. For all who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his loving heart, we should intercede, praying that they too may find it in their hearts to give glory to God and peace to men.

On Christmas Eve we should renew our faith in the all wise providence of Almighty God and assure ourselves that he knows best. Human though it be to grieve over a vacant chair and to desire a familiar face still it is sinful to droop in desolation at a soulless grave. Only sacred dust lies hidden there. No soul is there. The soul is with God. Instead of mourning at a tomb, pray for the loved one who stands on another shore but with whom in our Lord Jesus we have communion for evermore.

They love us still, the dear ones who are hidden
With Christ in God at rest within the Veil;
Though hearts may ache, and tears will rise unbidden,
The Christmas Eucharist with joy we hail·
For they and we, in one communion sweet,
Together worship at the Christ-Child's feet.

Before the last hour of Advent swiftly passes into Christmas day we should question ourselves as to why at Christmas the Church bells ring and the children sing. Eugene Field gives the answer:

Once a lovely shining star,
Seen by wise men from afar,
Gently moved until its light
Made a manger cradle bright.

There a darling Baby lay,
Pillowed soft upon the hay;
And its mother sang and smiled,
"This is Christ, the Holy Child."

Messiah has come. This is why the church bells ring. God kept his promise to Israel. This is why the children sing.

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